



TE|SF India

Transforming Education
for Sustainable Futures



RESEARCH REPORT | MARCH 2023

BREAKING THROUGH THE INTER-GENERATIONAL CYCLE OF EDUCATIONAL INEQUALITIES:

First Generation Learners, Stigmatized Occupational Groups and Sustainable Futures
with a focus on Theatre of the Oppressed Techniques and Embodied Practices

Principal Investigator: Anagha Tambe
Co-Investigator: Swati Dyahadroy

Citation

Tambe, A., & Dyahadroy, S. (2023). *Breaking through the inter-generational cycle of educational inequalities: First generation learners, stigmatized occupational groups and sustainable futures*. TEF India, IIHS.

Year of Publication: 2023 | **DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.24943/TEF1507.2023>

Acknowledgements: The support of the Economic and Social Research Council (UK) is gratefully acknowledged by TEF (award title 'UKRI GCRF Transforming Education Systems for Sustainable Development (TES4SD) Network Plus'). We thank all six organizations and their activists, Kagad Kach Patra Kashtakari Panchayat, Pune Zilla Ghar Kamgar Sanghatana, Saheli HIV/AIDS Karyakarta Sangh, Hamal Panchayat, India Sponsorship Committee, Manav Mukti Sangram and Krantijyoti who agreed to be part of the research. Without their support this work would not have been possible. We were benefitted by the insights and actual support extended by them on the field. We thank our students who assisted us in the data collection process and wrote detailed reflexive notes. We would also like to thank young girls and boys from the selected groups who participated in the focus group discussion and life narratives. Their contribution in shaping this project is very important. We also thank our research participants from survey. We would also like to acknowledge the advice received from TEF India and TEF Bristol teams. At the end we would like to thank Prof. Poonam Batra for giving us this opportunity to undertake this project, for giving us critical inputs at every stage of the project and for offering detailed comment on the draft report.



**Economic
and Social
Research Council**



This work is published under the CC BY-NC-SA International 4.0 License.



This license lets others remix, tweak, and build upon the text in this work for non-commercial purposes. Any new works must also acknowledge the authors and be non-commercial. Derivative works must also be licensed on the same terms.

This license excludes all photographs and images, which are rights reserved to the original artists.

Research Team

Principle Investigator: Anagha Tambe

Co-Investigator: Swati Dyahadroy

Research Assistance: Suvarna More, Samika Dandge, Bhavya Gupta, Shruti Waghmode, Nilima Gavade

Research Support: Sneha Gole, Lalit Bhaware, Sanjay Kamble, Deepa Tak from Department of Women and Gender Studies

Cover Image Illustration: Samika Dandge

Acknowledgements

Editing: IIHS Word Lab

Design & Layout: Shashwati Balasubramanian | Reviewed by: Prachi Prabhu and Padma Venkataraman
IIHS Communications and Design

Student Interns: Shubhanshi Dimri, Sharvari Deshpande, Manasi Shinde, Pranjali Sharma, Aditi
Dharmadhikar, Zeba Kazi, Devanshi Srivastava, Sushmita Upadhyay and Pradeep Kapse (Masters
Students, Department of Women and Gender Studies, SPPU)

Activists from Organizations and Union: Atul Bhalerao, Kiran Moghe, Tejswi Sevekari, Gorkah Mengade,
Jyoti Adhav, Nisha Parche, Rupali Jadhav

Contact

anaghatambe@hotmail.com / anaghatambe@gmail.com

TESF India Website: <https://www.tesfindia.iihs.co.in>

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	5
Introduction	6
Review of Literature	7
Educational Inequalities	7
Cultural Capital	7
First Generation College Students	8
Precarious, 'Dirty' and Stigmatised Work	9
Research Methodology	10
Research Participants	11
Sex Workers	12
Sanitation Workers	12
Waste Pickers	12
Brick Kiln Workers	12
Head Loaders	13
Domestic Workers	13
Collaboration with Informal Workers Organisation	13
Kagad Kach Patra Kashtakari Panchayat	14
Pune Zilla Ghar Kamgar Sanghatana (PZGKS)	14
Saheli HIV/AIDS Karyakarta Sangh	14
Hamal Panchayat	14
India Sponsorship Committee	15
Manav Mukti Sangram And Krantijyoti	15
Methodological Issues: How was Data Collected	15
Interviews With Key Informants	16
Household Survey	16
Focus Group Discussion	17
Life Narrative	18
Pedagogical Component	19
Introduction to the Field	19
Section 1: Understanding Educational Inequalities: Parental Occupation and Cultural Capital of Young Adults/First-Generation Learners	25
Parents' Perception of Education	26
Neighbourhood: Shaping/Obstructing the Educational Journey	27
Young Adults and Their Families	31
Role of Organisations/Unions	33
Section 2: Pedagogies for Researching the Marginalised	35
Narrative 1: Of Betrayal And Guilt	36
Narrative 2: Of Comfort And Listening	37
Narrative 3: Of Reflexive Learning and Connectedness	40
Conclusion	43
References	44

Annexure A	47
Tools	47
I Socio-Economic Background	47
II Family/Household	49
III Housing, Surrounding and Civic Amenities	50
IV Occupation and Insecurity	51
V Family and Children's Education	53
VI Governmental schemes	56
VII Parental Involvement and Perspectives in Children's Education	57
Annexure B	61
Key Informants Interview Schedule	61
Annexure C	63
Focus Group Discussion Interview Schedule	63
Annexure D	66
Life Narrative Interview Schedule	66
Annexure E	69
List of Participants	69

ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate educational inequalities amongst precarious and stigmatised workers and unravel how the deeply intertwined inequalities of caste, class and gender shape micro practices that work towards their children's educational exclusion and mobility. It explores how parental occupation, stigma, subsequent living conditions, neighbourhood, and mobilisations of and interventions for workers impact the educational journeys of first-generation students. This study, therefore, thinks together first-generation students, stigmatised occupations, and cultural and social capital (or its lack). This study focuses on unravelling the educational trajectories of first-generation college students, especially young women from families engaged in stigmatised work in the city of Pune. We chose Pune as our site as the city has a long history of struggles and mobilisations of informal workers. We selected six such occupational groups: waste pickers, sanitation workers, domestic workers, sex workers, head loaders and brick kiln workers. These different work sectors vary in terms of precarity of work, social stigma attached to it, legal protections, civil society support and political mobilisation. These occupations are gendered and constituted by caste in varied ways. We approached the workers through organisations and unions to examine their role in the educational attainment of their children, and shaping of the aspiration of parents and children regarding the intergenerational mobility through higher education. Along with mapping the struggles of first-generation learners, this project was also imagined as a pedagogic space, a collective transformative, reflexive and democratising space for radical imagination within and beyond the university. In this process, we encountered questions such as how do students learn about critical methodological and ethical issues of research? and How do they learn about the working of social power and transformative politics? We thus explored the political, affective and visceral dimensions of this learning processes through our research study.

Keywords: Higher education, cultural/social capital, critical empathy, critical pedagogy, first-generation learners

INTRODUCTION

Do children merely inherit their parents' unequal educational and socio-economic status? Or does higher education become a route to greater social mobility for them? How do families, occupational groups and communities shape the struggles of first-generation college students seeking to break the vicious intergenerational cycle of inequalities?

While we know that caste, class, religion, urban/rural location and gender are critical factors in reproducing educational inequalities, this study seeks to explore what impedes and what encourages the educational mobility of young women and men from socially disadvantaged groups. We focus here on the specific social group of precarious and "dirty" workers imbued with low education levels to examine what shapes the educational journeys of first-generation learners from these groups, and how these pathways are determined by gender and caste.

Informal labour, precarious, stigmatised and "dirty" labour forms the majority of workforce across the world, and it is connected with the formal economy to bear its risks and costs (Lum, 2019; Mhaskar, 2019; Thorat & Newman, 2010). Often, Dalit, tribal and socially disadvantaged groups, and specifically women from these groups, are relegated to precarious and stigmatised labour. The scale of workforce employed in stigmatised occupations is enormous, and these industries hold significant positions in the informal economy. With declining legal protection, informal workers are subjected to harsh, insecure and degrading conditions lacking rights, social protection, freedom and dignity. Recent times have witnessed increasing organisation of informal workers, especially those in stigmatised employment, who are struggling for welfare benefits from the state and dignity of decent work. Yet, precarious labour, rather than being a stepping stone to "decent" work, has often trapped informal workers, curtailing their prospects for mobility (Agarwala, 2013).

In the neoliberal time of anxieties about an uncertain future, education is emerging as a crucial space for aspirational mobility (Methew & Lukose, 2020). When the transfer of material and social resources is unequal in a society, the self becomes a critical resource of mobility for non-elites. Thus, non-elite students, families, occupational groups and communities can be seen mobilising resources and investing in education to construct their potential selves and imagine novel futures that may be both individual and collective.

This study aims to investigate educational inequalities amongst precarious and stigmatised workers and unravel how the deeply intertwined inequalities of caste, class and gender shape micro practices in this group of stigmatized workers that work towards excluding children from attaining quality education and hampering their chances of upward mobility. The study particularly focuses on the gendered practices and processes that impede young women from attaining such mobility. It explores how parental occupation, stigma, subsequent living conditions, neighbourhoods in the city and also mobilisations of and interventions for workers impact the educational journeys of first-generation students. It interrogates the persistent and complex inequalities to think about reducing these inequalities and their intergenerational transfer for sustainable futures.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The debates over inequalities and exclusion in the domain of higher education in India have resurfaced in the context of “silent revolution”¹ since 1990s. As the Indian higher education system grows to be one of the largest in the world, despite relatively low rate of enrolment in the global map, the issue of educational inequalities has come to be mobilised more assertively by the transformative forces for democratising education. It is the discourse of declining academic standards and merit that has emerged insidiously with the unprecedented entry of socially and educationally disadvantaged groups into the university in 1990s. And equality and inclusion have come to be positioned since then, either in dichotomy or isolation from the excellence and quality of education. Yet, the last three decades and more have witnessed significant scholarship on educational exclusion along the axes of caste, class, gender, religion, tribe, region and so on in terms of both policy and practices (Deshpande, 2013; Thorat, 2015; Tilak, 2015).

With this backdrop, we seek to focus on the category of first-generation learners, which crosscuts and overlaps other categories of educational disadvantage. We aim to bring nuance into this discussion by focusing on parental occupation that is precarious and stigmatised, and unpack the drivers and hurdles drawing from the conceptual framework of cultural capital.

Educational Inequalities

A critical focus in these studies that goes beyond the issue of exclusionary access to higher education is on institutional culture and climate entrenched in caste, class and gender discrimination. Recent debates around suicides of Dalit and backward caste students in higher educational institutions and the institutional murder of Rohit Vemula,² or sexual harassment of women and the MeToo campaign in universities have led to studies examining how educational institutions reproduce social prejudice and stereotypes, generating a silent culture of social privilege. Hostile institutional environments are problematised in a manner that devalues students from socially disadvantaged groups and blocks recognition and addressal of structural barriers (Bargi, 2017; Thirumal & Christy, 2018). The institutional culture of elite universities has been focused upon to underline how Dalit students have to confront the pervasive anti-Dalit and anti-reservation discourse of intellectual weakness often by remaining closeted (Lum, 2019). Along with the campus climate, educational inequality is understood in terms of its intergenerational reproduction, through parental and familial environments embedded in social disadvantage, drawing from the conceptual framework of cultural capital.

Cultural Capital

Bourdieu's signature concept of cultural capital has become durable over decades to explain social, economic and cultural correlates of educational inequalities and stratification. Davies and Rizk (2017) map the three generations of cultural capital research, mainly in the Western context, that uses both

¹ Jaffrelot proposed the idea of “India's silent revolution” which brings political transformation in terms of transfer of power from upper castes to Dalits and Other Backward Classes (OBCs). However, its implication on the political economy or how much this transformation will empower this section economically were not clear. According to him, this political transformation needs to enhance economic status to achieve real empowerment and realise the promise of equality.

² Rohit Vemula, a Dalit student committed suicide on 17th January 2016, at the time he was pursuing Ph.D at the University of Hyderabad. His suicide which was underlined as an institutional murder-initiated protest against caste-based discrimination in the space of universities. His suicide note was read as a stark criticism against the Brahmanical domination and continuation of exploitation of lower caste groups.

quantitative and qualitative methodologies to analyse the fungibility of cultural capital to educational advantage. Drawing from Bourdieu's idea of habitus or "feel for the game", cultural capital is examined using various constructs such as academic preparation, parental preferences and expectations, and parental involvement. And social capital is represented using the constructs of parental communication, peers' influence and teacher motivation (Dumais & Ward, 2010). Some of the major insights from these studies highlight how cultural capital is acquired over time, mainly through the socialisation process at home and how it comprises of both structural barriers as well as agential strategies. It is often disguised, and therefore it appears that students are being rewarded for their natural academic talents or "merit", when in fact they get rewarded because of their cultural capital.

In the Indian context, this concept is used in research on educational inequalities, mainly in relation to class. Nambissan (2010) discusses how the Indian middle classes asserting merit-based success have created educational advantage over time through "family sponsorship". This includes parenting/mothering practices of creating educational environment at home, of owning values, standards and practical knowledge of educational institutions. Similarly, Chickerur (2020) underlines the cultural capital accumulated by middle-class Brahmin women over generations that facilitates their smooth educational progression. Studies on first-generation learners and those excluded from higher education on the other hand, have often emphasised the deprivation of cultural capital, embodied, inherited as well as institutionalised capital in families, leading to educational disadvantage. One of the strands in these studies blames parents with low educational levels for failing to provide any educational guidance to their children, or appropriate educational environment at home. The transfer of parental inequalities to children is thus perceived negatively.

First-generation College Students

An overwhelming majority of students within higher education across the world today consist of first-generation students (Agarwala, 2013; Wadhwa, 2018). First-generation students have emerged as a distinct category that marks educational inequality. The experiences and unique challenges faced by this group in higher educational institutions are studied extensively in certain contexts like the US, where expanding educational terrain has meant that majority of students are first-generation learners. The economic purposes of universalisation of higher education with the rising significance of knowledge-based economy has led to a preoccupation with these students as human capital. These studies typically compare first-generation students with students whose parents have had college education, in terms of pre-college entry issues and decisions, focus on their transition from high school to college, and explore their academic attainment, retention issues and outcomes in college. Several reports and quantitative studies have identified challenges for first-generation students in terms of rising aspirations for college, navigating the college admissions process and easing the initial transition to college. Dumais and Ward (2010) point out that first-generation students do not have the same sense of entitlement or belonging to a higher educational institution. It is both the familial as well as institutional environment which instils a sense of alienation or loneliness amongst them, which obstructs their academic achievement.

Despite the fact that a majority of college students in India are first-generation learners, there has been little research on the challenges faced by them in their educational endeavour (Wadhwa, 2018). Rather, it is broadly argued that the unequal origin and unequal treatment leads to unequal educational attainment for first-generation learners. The under-investigation of this category of the first-generation learner in

India has entailed in its collapsing into the exclusion of caste, class and region by pointing out that the majority of them come from lower castes and tribes. First-generation students are also identified in terms of children of agricultural labourers, bonded labourers and civic sanitation workers with no educational background (Wadhwa, 2018). Or they are explained with factors such as education in a government high school in a rural setting with poor infrastructure, or in regional language medium, frequent encounters with discrimination, prejudice, and rejection from teachers and fellow students obstructing their academic success. On the other hand, first-generation learners are addressed only in terms of parental education and familial environment, and lack of cultural capital. This clearly indicates that there is less deliberation on how the breaking of the intergenerational cycle of inequalities amongst socially marginalised groups through day-to-day family life and breakthrough strategies that prioritise education through non-material resources remains completely obscured. Hence, it is important to do further examination of the family capital in terms of family values, interpersonal relationships and its attitudes to education needs.

Precarious, “Dirty” and Stigmatised Work

Though dignity in the workplace is an inalienable component of decent work and depends on the self-esteem and autonomy of workers, a variety of work falls outside the framework of decent work. This precarious and degrading work in the informal sector is performed largely by Dalits and backward castes across religions (Mhaskar, 2019). These occupations are marked by abuse, unwarranted suspicion and harassment from the police, municipal workers and citizens, no social security benefits, spatial location on the fringes of the locality, and apathy of the state, mainstream political parties and civil society. Thorat and Newman (2010) point out how Dalits remain restricted to these menial “unclean” and “polluting” occupations, and the immobility of labour between various occupations leads to the ghettoisation in economy. The occupational taint, physical, social and moral, has elicited dehumanisation of these occupational groups, though they contribute to reducing pollution, maintaining city cleanliness and preventing the spread of diseases, even at risk to themselves. In addition to precarity and stigma of their work, intersection of this “dirty” work with caste and religion has ensured the intergenerational reproduction of inequalities. The failure to provide quality education and access to various resources to these historically disadvantaged groups has further blocked the possibilities for mobility and freedom. In this study, we would therefore examine what strategies, albeit partial and temporal, they adopt to protect children from stigma and how they place hope on education for their children even when it is fraught with challenges. We seek to understand how first-generation students seek to achieve social mobility and freedom from caste-based occupational rigidity.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study brings together first-generation students, stigmatised occupations, and cultural and social capital (or the lack thereof). It is located in the city of Pune, which has witnessed a long history of struggles and mobilisations of precarious and stigmatised workers, from the head load workers of Hamal Panchayat to the domestic workers of Molkarin Sanghatana (Deshpande, 1999). The study works with six stigmatised occupational groups to examine processes of intergenerational reproduction and mobility in terms of education.

The objectives of the study are as follows:

- Mapping the educational attainment amongst workers in stigmatised and precarious occupations across generations and analysis of its gender and caste underpinnings
- Unpacking the diverse category of first-generation learners to identify micro drivers and hurdles in reducing intergenerational educational inequalities
- Problematising the idea of educational equality/inequality, going beyond access and intersectionality
- Collaborating with different stakeholders, including civil society groups, unions, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), educators and so on to investigate the problem of educational inequality in higher education and intervene through dialogue and consultation meetings
- Creating diverse pedagogical, policy and advocacy-oriented resources from the standpoint of first-generation college students
- Designing strategies to promote inter-group dialogue amongst college students from different social locations.

The study attempts to address the following research questions:

- What is the educational attainment amongst workers from stigmatised and precarious occupations across generations? And what are its gender and caste underpinnings?
- How are educational inequalities reproduced across generations in these communities? What practices facilitate the breaking through of this cycle?
- What are the micro-practices that constitute (the lack of) cultural capital of first-generation college students whose families work in stigmatised occupations? How do stigma and precarity of work through family, community, neighbourhood, occupational group and collective organisations influence the possession of cultural capital?
- How do the experiences of marginalised groups such as first-generation learners and stigmatised occupational groups with low educational levels become a critical resource to inform specific interventions for educational mobility?

This study combines quantitative and qualitative methods with the action research components to work with different stakeholders through dialogue and material creation. It involves the following research components:

- Dialogue and collaboration with civil society groups, activists and leaders to understand the problem of educational attainment within stigmatised occupational groups, and the efforts and interventions undertaken and envisioned by them to challenge specific educational inequalities.
- Survey of households of workers from the stigmatised occupations to examine intergenerational educational attainment and mobility.
- Focus group discussion (FGD) with first-generation learners, building upon data gathered from the survey. The focus was on the environment within the community, their neighbourhood and educational institutions that shaped their educational journeys. Participants were identified in terms of gender, caste and other relevant parameters.
- Life narratives of first-generation college students. The survey and FGD data was used both to inform the research tools as well as to identify participants.
- Action research component that included
 - Pedagogies for field research, specifically with the marginalised groups: Post-graduate students of women and gender studies were selected as interns to assist in data collection, data processing and other research tasks for introducing them the question of first-generation college students. The participation of student interns specifically in conducting FGDs and life narratives generated intergroup dialogue and the insights gained from these interactions have enriched the study. The learning and reflections of the interns have informed the action research component.
 - Creation of diverse material, such as a module for teacher education programme highlighting teachers as change agents to address struggles of first-generation college students, and policy and advocacy briefs for organisations working with stigmatised occupational groups, for educators and other practitioners.

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

This study focuses on the educational trajectories of first-generation college students, especially young women from families engaged in precarious and stigmatised work. We selected six such occupational groups: waste pickers, sanitation workers, domestic workers, sex workers, head loaders and brick kiln workers. These occupations vary in terms of precarity of work, the social stigma attached to it, legal protections available, civil society support and political mobilisation. Further, these occupations are gendered as well as structured by caste. While sex work, domestic work and waste picking are overwhelmingly performed by women, headload work is seen largely as men's work. Sanitation work and brick kiln work tend to involve families, where both men and women are recruited. At the same time, certain kinds of work are seen as dirty and polluting, such as sanitation work, brick kiln work and waste picking, and are usually undertaken by Dalits, Adivasis and lower castes. Sex work also falls under this category to an extent. On the other hand, domestic work and headload work, though of low status,

involves workers coming from varied castes of relatively higher status. While sex work and waste picking can be considered as self-employment, domestic work, headload work, sanitation work and brick kiln work is paid work. This study explores how differential stigma and precarity shape intergenerational mobility of these groups, specifically in terms of the education of their children.

Sex Workers

Sex work is one of the most stigmatised occupations. Almost always, it is women who engage in sex work. The precarity of the occupation is caused by several factors, such as its informal nature, its illegal status, and the social stigma and isolation that comes with it. Sex workers largely belong to Dalit and lower-caste communities, and several practices of caste-based sexual labour shape sex work in contemporary India. Only recently has sex work been recognised as labour, similar to any other occupation. It is in the context of AIDS control initiatives that sex work came to be addressed. Various sex worker unions organised to fight for their rights, the development sector sought the empowerment of sex workers, while the state sought to regulate them (Shah, 2003). Their acutely difficult work-cum-residential environment makes it challenging for them to educate their children. Even though the popular frame of compassion towards the children of sex workers is found limiting as it makes the agency and struggles of these children and their mothers invisible (Sircar & Dutta, 2011).

Sanitation Workers

Sanitation works in India belong to the Dalit community, mainly the Valmiki and Matang communities who are lowest in the caste hierarchy. Though some sanitation workers are permanent public sector employment, majority of them work in the unorganised sector as contractual labourers in degrading conditions. For instance, manual scavenging is considered to be polluting work that is exploitative and also humiliating, but it continues despite the legal ban on manual scavenging in India and endlessly pushes the workers into an undignified life, whether they work in the unorganised or organised sector. The stigma attached to these labouring communities has continued even with the use of new modernising techniques (Bhattacharjee et al., 2014). In order to free their children from the indignity of this work, education is seen as pivotal, yet remains fraught with challenges (Walters, 2019).

Waste Pickers

Waste pickers as an occupational group (formerly known by such pejorative terms as rag-pickers) are on the margins of urban spaces. Though a part of the solid waste management industry and contributing both economically and ecologically through recycling, being associated with “waste” (read as dirt/pollution) marks it as work that is not “decent”. Waste pickers were not seen as a distinct occupational group till the formation of unions (Chikarmane, 2012; Chikarmane et al., 2001). Across India, a majority of the waste pickers are women, coming from Scheduled Castes (SCs) and tribes, along with Muslims and Other Backward Classes (OBCs). They face the stigma of “polluting” work and are often thrown out as conditions of work within the sector improve. Their work conditions often compel them to take assistance of their children is seen as working against the educational pursuit of their children.

Brick Kiln Workers

Brick kiln work is based on debt-bondage across the world. It is most exploitative, often isolated and hazardous for workers. In India, a majority of these workers are lower-caste and tribal people from

the distressed agrarian economy who seasonally migrate for this non-farm low-wage precarious work. These workers often seek to leave behind or escape oppressive village environments, only to be trapped in slavery-like forms of labour exploitation, occupational health risks and climatic risks with global heating (Shah, 2006). The use of child labour in particular has impeded educational attainment generationally, entailing low educational levels and its reproduction amongst brick kiln workers.

Headload Workers

Headload workers, load carriers or *mathadi* workers are informal sector labourers working for daily wages in grain warehouses, agricultural wholesale markets, domestic gas projects and so on. It is arduous labour of manually loading and unloading, packing and unpacking, shifting and carrying heavy sacks to different locations, which is humiliating and lacks dignity. The Government of Maharashtra enacted the Maharashtra Mathadi Hamal and other Manual Workers (Regulation of Employment and Welfare) Act in 1969 (Mane & Lalwani, 2020). This law has sought to provide social security to the unprotected labour, welfare, safety and health measures and regular employment through Mathadi boards that include participation of workers. The informal nature of this work shapes the educational trajectories of their children.

Domestic Workers

Paid domestic work is emerging as a major sector of urban employment for women in globalising times. Domestic workers form a precarious category of work as they are not recognised as workers, since their workplace is socially isolated and the private “home” of the employer. As an extension of unpaid, undefined, devalued domestic work, it is considered unskilled and continues to be low waged, pushing domestic workers into poverty and rendering them susceptible to social vulnerabilities. Like other workers in the informal sector, they are unprotected, exploited and have very little bargaining power (Moghe, 2013). Paid domestic workers are often migrants and come from different caste groups. There seems to be relatively low stigma attached to this work, and this shapes the educational possibilities for their children, who are still caught in the materially insecure environment.

COLLABORATION WITH INFORMAL WORKERS ORGANISATIONS

We approached the six selected occupational groups through workers’ organisations in line with our methodological framework and ethical concerns. We aimed to examine the role of the organisations in the educational attainment of the workers’ children and in the intergenerational mobility in these stigmatised occupational groups. These organisations also became our partners in constructing research tools for the study and in identifying research participants. We focused on the city of Pune due to pandemic restrictions. Besides this, Pune was selected as a significant research site because the city has seen pioneering organisation of informal workers such as domestic workers, waste pickers and head loaders, some of whom became our partners in this study. The rationale for selecting these organisations was the difference we found in their politics of mobilising informal workers. It was important to get a glimpse of the organisational landscape and to explore their politics in enabling intergenerational mobility of workers. The organisations include unions, NGOs and civil society voluntary groups with varied approaches and strategies to address the challenges faced by informal workers.

Kagad Kach Patra Kashtakari Panchayat

The Kagad Kach Patra Kashtakari Panchayat (KKPKP) is a trade union established in Pune in 1993 that continues to have a predominantly female membership. It was initiated as an informal education program by the Department of Adult and Continuing Education at SNDT University for children of waste pickers. It brought together waste pickers, itinerant waste buyers, waste collectors and other informal recyclers, who are all self-employed workers. KKPKP has successfully argued for waste picking as an occupation to be environmentally sustainable, socially inclusive and economically productive. Further, the union has managed to integrate them into the municipal solid waste management system. Along with improving the quality and conditions of work, a major initiative of the union has been to ensure access to education for children of waste pickers to enable intergenerational mobility out of this work. They have also focused on improving access to formal healthcare, credit, education and social security for waste pickers and their families through collective reflection and action, including the establishment of a new network of community-based centres to raise awareness among workers. The union's emphasis on compulsory education aims to prevent child labour and fulfil parental aspirations for their children's occupational mobility. It monitors the formal education system to prevent children from being pushed out through their annual school enrolment drives. The union has lobbied and mobilised for the inclusion of these children among the beneficiaries in central government-aided schemes and scholarships. The focus, therefore, is on upgrading the sector and conditions of work, while simultaneously aiming for an intergenerational shift out from the occupation with the promotion of education as the primary means.

Pune Zilla Gharkamgar Sanghatana

The Pune Zilla Gharkamgar Sanghatana (PZGKS) was formed in 2004 under the provisions of the Trade Union Act of 1926 to push for the recognition of domestic workers as workers by their employers and the state. Since 2008, the welfare act for domestic workers has been enacted. PZGKS aims to improve their low wages and insecurity as women, as working class and their vulnerabilities compounded by their caste. The organisation is aware that domestic workers identify education as a path for upward mobility. It sees domestic work not only a generational transfer of work, but also a consequence of limited opportunities. To interrupt this cycle, the organisation provides scholarships to daughters and granddaughters of domestic workers attached to PZGKS, enabling them to pursue higher education.

Saheli HIV/AIDS Karyakarta Sangh

Saheli was established in 1995 as an NGO in Budhwar Peth, a red-light area in Pune. It represents the interests of sex workers and those in allied professions who have had both direct and indirect contact with HIV. Their mission is to provide healthcare support and empower sex workers by helping them resolve issues associated with their occupation. It aims to educate and care for the children of sex workers to prevent them from entering the profession through facilities like crèche and facilitating admission in residential schools.

Hamal Panchayat

Hamal Panchayat is an organisation of load carriers, who form a significant group of urban unorganised workers involved in the service sector. Formed in 1955, the most significant accomplishment of the panchayat in its initial years was the creation and implementation of the Maharashtra Mathadi, Hamal and other Manual Workers (Regulation of Employment and Welfare) Act, 1969. In 1988, the panchayat

suggested a welfare scheme for women workers in Pune markets, expanding the act to cover them. The panchayat has taken several measures to provide its workers with essential facilities such as banking, medical care, a cooperative housing society and a community kitchen (Kashtachi Bhakar) where nutritious food is served at a nominal rate and women from Hamal households are employed. It has made considerable efforts in providing education for the workers' children by establishing the Hamal Kashtakari Panchayat Vidyalaya in the year 2000, a free school for these children, a book bank or *pustakpedhi*, monetary prizes and educational loans.

India Sponsorship Committee

India Sponsorship Committee (ISC) has been engaged in preventing child labour, particularly in the brick kiln sector in Pune. ISC provides a range of activities to support children recovering from such labour, including educational support classes, preschool centres, gender awareness programmes, a mobile library, interventions for nutritious food, health and safety, and extra-curricular activities like sports, life skills and art. The committee has been running educational programmes such as the urban community development project since 1979–80, which educates children of migrant brick kiln labourers through non-formal education, integrating them into mainstream society.

Krantijyoti and Manav Mukti Sangram

Krantijyoti was established in 2011 with the primary goal of fostering self-awareness, leadership and emancipation among women who have suffered as a result of society's overarching patriarchal structure. Their central emphasis is on sanitation workers and other unorganised workers, with an increasing focus on the education of young girls. Their work takes place across slums in Pune with their sister organisation Manav Mukti Sangram. The work of these organisations can be seen through their flagship Ramai Vocational Programme, which trains women in stitching and binding work so that they can move away from stigmatised. Krantijyoti awards scholarships, career counselling and financial assistance to young female Dalit students, encourages transition of workers to alternative employment through the training, provides them medical check-ups and vaccinations, and remains committed to promoting gender equity.

DATA COLLECTION AND METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

Data collection for this study was guided by collaborative methodology. We partnered with workers' organisations and discussed with a diverse team of research assistants and student interns to construct research agendas and tools and to collect and analyse data. Their different positionalities in the field, and more broadly in research, and their different social identities have shaped our study. The emphasis was to understand the social and political world as it is conceived by those who are living that. The effort was to look at the research participants not as subjects, but as collaborators in the process of understanding and researching their world. This enhanced our study as it provided an opportunity for the participants to voice their concerns and gave them an agential role in the research conducted on/for them.

Interviews with Key Informants

The project started with a meeting with the key informants, which included founders, heads and coordinators of education programmes run by workers' organisations to share and discuss the research objectives, its rationale and the research plan. Semi-structured interviews were conducted by the faculty of women's studies with one key team member identified by the organisations to understand the challenges faced by workers regarding educational attainments and intergenerational mobility (See Annexure B for the interview schedule and Annexure E for the participant information sheet.)

Household Survey

A survey was conducted with 253 respondents from six occupational groups located in different parts of Pune. We had aimed to include 50 households from each occupational group. However, differences in the involvement of the organisations and accessibility of workers led to an uneven participation of diverse occupational groups. We used snowball sampling method to reach out to a larger set of participants. We sought help from those whom we contacted first to reach out to other participants from that group. Among the 253 respondents, 54 were from families of sex workers, 51 from domestic workers, 50 from waste pickers, 42 from the head loaders group, 32 from sanitation workers and 24 from brick kiln workers.

The survey questionnaire was finalised after feedback from the workers' organisations and discussion on the pilot survey undertaken by the research team (see Annexure A for the questionnaire). The training workshop with research assistants and student interns involved lectures on the theme of stigmatised occupational groups and workers' organisations, survey methods and introduction to fieldwork. Three debrief meetings with field investigators around their field observation notes enabled us to address the specific challenges of the field as well as served as a pedagogical exercise.

The survey was conducted by a team of research assistants and student interns who worked in pairs of one interviewer and one observer, organised as per the language spoken and their research experience. Research participants were approached through the organisational contact, who often accompanied the research team to the *bastis* (settlements) and homes. Some of the interviews were conducted at the participants' workplace; for instance, in the case of sanitation workers. For the sex workers and brick kiln workers, their place of work was often also their home. Many of the interviews were conducted at the organisation's office, especially in the case of head loaders, sex workers and sanitation workers. During office interviews, it was frequently observed that other workers were present and could overhear the conversation. As a result, many interviewees were cautious and guarded in their responses to sensitive questions, such as those related to their income. In the case of brick kiln workers, surveys were conducted in their homes located near the kilns. A lot of interviews were rushed due to the workers having to rush back to stamp the setting bricks. It was common for family members of the interviewees to be present in the same room, with some family members chiming in even after the interview was already underway with one member. There was a noticeable gendered aspect to this, with female respondents often seeking cues or approval from their husbands before answering questions. Interviews were typically conducted in Marathi, although interviews with other language backgrounds or interstate migrant workers in occupations such as brick kiln and sex work were conducted in Hindi. The duration of the interviews varied, ranging from 45 minutes to one hour, depending on the amount of information the respondent was willing to share.

Focus Group Discussion

We conducted three FGDs with young, first-generation higher education students whose parents came from a specific occupational group. We initially hoped to contact students whose parents we had previously interacted with while conducting household surveys. However, due to logistical delays and hurdles, we were not always able to accomplish the desired numbers. The criteria for including FGD participants was as follows:

- We included those whose parents are in the same occupation to ensure similarity of social profile.
- We ensured that there was little gap within the group in terms of age and educational level.
- We aimed for gender representation in the FGD.
- We ensured that all participants were familiar and comfortable with each other during the FGD.

However, our pool of young, first-generation higher education students who fulfilled these criteria was very small. This forced us to include young people who fulfilled only the first three criteria, which has affected the way FGD was conducted. We could conduct only three FGDs with children out of six occupational groups.

In the case of the sex workers' group, most of the children were studying in residential campuses out of Pune. More importantly, the organisation was apprehensive—and rightly so—about identifying them in public. In the case of the brick kiln workers, as most of their children were studying outside the city, they were unavailable for the FGD. The children of headload workers also could not be brought together for the FGD despite several efforts.

The FGD tool was prepared and finalised after a pilot that revealed many gaps in our questionnaire. We added icebreaker games to the tool in order to make the participants more comfortable in the beginning, which also worked as positive reinforcement tools. The game helped to establish rapport and comfort with student participants. It had questions related to the everyday lives of students, their leisure activities, preferred forms of popular culture, number of languages spoken, favourite social media applications and so on. The students responded with enthusiasm and delight, resulting in a positive and engaging discussion. The ice-breaking game proved to be an effective method of introducing the FGD and creating a relaxed atmosphere conducive to open conversation. We realised that the discussion on various issues from their everyday life helped them articulate what they felt about their life, their aspirations, their college/university and more. As stated earlier, they were not familiar with each other so there was some discomfort amongst the participants. Still, we managed to take the discussion ahead.

We concluded the discussions with an interactive report card activity that encouraged students to create new subjects not typically found in traditional curricula and grade themselves accordingly. We encouraged them to write the report card of their school and college by grading them based on the role these institutions played in their academic progress. This exercise had a consistently positive impact on the students as it challenged the norms of formal education, giving them freedom to showcase their strengths and appreciate previously overlooked skills or interests that were not reflected in standard report cards.

Finding an appropriate space for the FGD was also an important aspect. There was a conscious effort made to make sure that the FGD were conducted in spaces where the students felt safe. These activities

were conducted with the help of organisations working with the various occupational groups. In case of waste pickers' groups, for the FGD, the students were gathered through Manoday, a de-addiction centre that works with student volunteers who mostly come from the waste pickers group, in affiliation with KKPKP. Hence, the discussion was held at the Manoday office, a familiar space for the children. For the domestic workers, FGD, a *vihara* (Buddhist monastery) was scouted through personal contacts of the researchers. For the sanitation workers FGD, a space called *kothi* was readily available. This is a leisure time space for sanitation workers, but due to its location being next to a very busy main road and the hustle bustle of the workers, there was a lot of noise which made conducting an FGD there a challenge.

All the FGDs were recorded and transcribed by the research team to retain as much data as possible. The limitation here was that the icebreaker game, even though recorded, could not capture the physical movement of the participants. Thus, for analysis, we had to depend upon the observation notes of researchers. The game on one hand acted as an icebreaker, but also on the other hand gave us space to interact with the participants in a more informal way and helped us develop connections with them. After all the FGDs were conducted, we had a debrief meeting with the researchers to discuss the diverse data collected and also to reflect on the research process. This helped in documenting the details of the conversations and understand the group dynamics. The observations of the researchers highlighted the way participants in each group were communicating with each other, and this helped us to document rather than interpret what was not expressed.

Life Narratives

The life narrative tool was built upon learnings from the earlier FGD and survey tools and how they worked for our study. Unstructured conversations of researchers with first-generation college students also helped in identifying concerns and challenges felt by them. The brainstorming in the debrief meetings with researchers and student interns brought out rich insights from the field to finalise the tool (see interview schedule and participant information sheet in Annexure D and E). Workshops were conducted with researchers and student interns to discuss life narratives as a tool. The students also read transcripts of life narratives from other studies and researchers who had conducted these life narratives earlier also shared their experience.

The team conducted a total of 23 life narrative interviews with students, of which five were from the community of domestic workers, five from sex workers, two from sanitation workers, three from head loaders and three from brick kiln workers. The interviews were conducted by a pair of researcher and student intern, one as an interviewer and other as an observer. These were conducted in various places identified by the participants, mostly their homes, but sometimes also public spaces like parks, organisation offices and our department in the university. Most interviews were conducted in the evening, since the participants were students and/or worked during the day. We hoped for the interviews to be conducted as more informal conversations for the comfort of the respondents wherein interaction became more important than having to follow the structure of the tool. The length, questions as well as possible conversations solely depended on the comfort of the respondents. Throughout the process, field notes were taken by both the interviewer and the observer, which were eventually compiled along with the transcriptions. These notes and transcriptions were read by all members of the research team and led to numerous debrief meetings being held for a discussion of the same.

Pedagogical Component

This research study was framed as a pedagogic space for our students interns, who were enrolled in a master's course or had completed a one-year diploma. They came from diverse social groups to learn about critical methodological and ethical issues of research, but more important, about the working of social power and transformative politics. The pedagogic process involved the following:

- Training and interactive sessions for orienting and preparing students for research, including special lectures by activists and scholars on the theme
- Data collection by students in the field along with researchers, as observers, note-takers and interviewers, and writing of field notes
- Debriefing and reflective meetings and documentation of these meetings.

INTRODUCTION TO THE FIELD

This section provides a brief profile of workers in the stigmatised occupations under study (see Table 1). A household survey was conducted with 253 households from six occupational groups. Out of the total respondents, 72 per cent were female and 28 per cent were male.

Table 1: Distribution of occupational groups in the sample

Occupational Group	Number of Respondents	% to Total Respondents
Brick kiln worker	24	9.5%
Domestic worker	51	20.2%
Headload worker	42	16.6%
Sanitation worker	31	12.3%
Sex worker	54	21.4%
Waste picker	50	20%
Grand Total	252	100

Source: Compiled by the authors

Socio-economic profile of respondents

Most of the occupations under study are overwhelmingly gendered and constituted by caste. While domestic workers, sex workers and even waste pickers are mainly female, head loaders are predominantly male. This gendered nature is affirmed by our key informants from the respective workers' organisations as well. While sanitation workers and brick kiln workers include both women and men, the brick kiln workers we interacted with were mostly women as we met them during the day at home.

Table 2: Gender distribution among the occupational groups (in percentage)

Occupational Group	Female	Male
Brick kiln worker	71	29
Domestic worker	100	0
Headload worker	0	100
Sanitation worker	58	42
Sex worker	100	0
Waste picker	86	14
Grand Total	72	28

Source: Compiled by the authors

The majority of our participants (51 per cent) were SCs. The distribution of SC workers in our sample included 100 per cent among waste pickers, 69 per cent among sanitation workers, 54 per cent of brick kiln workers and only 14 per cent of head loaders. Workers belonging to Scheduled Tribes (ST) are seen only amongst brick kiln workers (21 per cent) and sex workers (20 per cent). Fifty-seven per cent head loaders came from the general category while in other occupations, this proportion was 20–33 per cent (see Table 3).

Table 3: Reservation category distribution (in percentage)

Occupational Group	General	DTNT (De-notified and Nomadic Tribes)	Other Backward Classes	Scheduled Castes	Scheduled Tribes	Grand Total
Brick kiln worker	21	4	00	54	21	100
Domestic worker	32	18	14	36	00	100
Headload worker	57	10	14	14	5	100
Sanitation worker	21	00	10	69	00	100
Sex worker	33	2	12	33	20	100
Waste picker	00	00	00	100	00	100
Grand Total	27	6.84	8.42	51	6	100

Source: Compiled by the authors

While 76 per cent of head loaders own farmland, only 10 per cent of waste pickers own land. Amongst other occupational groups this proportion is around 30–40 per cent.

In terms of their migration histories, almost one-fourth of the brick kiln workers and sex workers in our sample have been living in Pune for less than 10 years. Very few of them have been living here for more

than 30 years. This is in contrast to other groups, where 50–70 per cent of the participants have lived in Pune for more than 30 years.

While the majority of brick kiln workers (86 per cent), sex workers (72 per cent) and head loaders (64 per cent) reported a village as their native place, the majority of sanitation workers (55 per cent) reported a metropolitan city as their native place (see Table 4).

Table 4: Native place (distribution in percentage)

Occupational Group	Metropolitan City	Village	Non-metropolitan City/Town
Brick kiln worker	4	86	10
Domestic worker	33	41	26
Headload worker	29	64	7
Sanitation worker	55	35	10
Sex worker	19	72	9
Waste picker	49	39	12

Source: Compiled by the authors

While 68 per cent of the head loaders go back to their hometown for agricultural work, 35 per cent of the brick kiln workers and 23 per cent of the sanitation workers do the same. This proportion is very low (4–13 per cent) amongst other groups. Fifty-five per cent reported that their family work on a farm or in any farming-related occupation.

Income-related data suggests that head loaders (62 per cent) and sanitation workers (39 per cent) earn within higher brackets of income (₹10,000–₹20,000). On the other hand, 46 per cent of brick kiln workers and 37 per cent of domestic workers fall within lower brackets of income (less than ₹5,000).

Through the data collected on consumer items, type of house and type of ration card held by a family, an attempt has been made to comprehend their overall living conditions and lifestyles. The data shows that in terms of consumption patterns, 86 per cent owned smartphones and 10 per cent owned laptops. Fifty-one per cent owned two-wheelers. The economic condition appears to be average. The availability of smart phones is related to the COVID-19 pandemic, which forced families to purchase smart phones to ensure the continuation of their children's education. However, one cannot assume that they can work on Microsoft Word or other softwares as few own computers at home.

We found that 23 per cent lived in *kaccha* (having temporary or semi-permanent structure) houses, 19 per cent in semi-*pucca* (having permanent structure) houses, and 53 per cent in slums. While 58 per cent possess an orange ration card (held by households with an annual income of ₹15,000–₹1,00,000), 35 per cent possess yellow ration cards (held by households with an annual income of ₹15,000 or below). The

type of house underlines that majority of them are living in the slums and that the houses are also not properly built. The data shows that neighbourhood resources, both financial and material, are meagre and creates an economic, cultural and social lack.

Precarity and stigma attached to the respondents' work

Apart from brick kiln work, all other work is done all year round. For 58 per cent of the brick kiln workers, this is their first generation in this occupation; for 33 per cent it is their second generation; and for 9 per cent the third generation. Waste pickers have a higher proportion of generational workers, while sex workers and even sanitation workers have less proportion of generational workers. Brick kiln work, domestic work, head loading and waste picking have around 50 per cent of their workers as generational.

Table 5: How many generations have been working in this occupation? (figures in percentage)

Occupational Group	First Generation	Second Generation	Third Generation	Total
Brick kiln worker	58	33	8	100.00
Domestic worker	48	36	16	100.00
Headload worker	58	40	3	100.00
Sanitation worker	74	13	13	100.00
Sex worker	89	11	0	100.00
Waste picker	34	54	12	100.00
Grand Total	57	33	9	100.00

Source: Compiled by the authors

The proportion of workers who reported that they had quit such work in their generation was very low (see Table 6).

Table 6: Has anyone in your generation quit this work? (figures in percentage)

Occupational Group	Yes	No
Brick kiln worker	39.13	60.87
Domestic worker	15.22	84.78
Headload worker	25.00	75.00
Sanitation worker	20.00	80.00
Sex worker	29.41	70.59
Waste picker	10.00	90.00
Grand Total	21.43	78.57

Source: Compiled by the authors

While 78 per cent reported that the proportion of children from the next generation entering their parents' occupation is nil, 17 per cent report that this was a small figure, except sex workers (3 per cent) and sanitation workers (13 per cent). More than 20 per cent from other occupational groups, that is, domestic workers, headload workers, brick kiln workers and waste pickers reported this. The proportion of workers

directly entering these occupations without a work history in any other occupations is highest amongst domestic workers, followed by sex workers and waste pickers.

Except for sex workers, all other workers reported a greater presence of people from their caste in the work they do: 80 per cent sanitation workers, 76 per cent waste pickers, 68 per cent head loaders, 67 per cent brick kiln workers, 64 per cent domestic workers and 42 per cent sex workers. Relatedly, a considerable proportion of workers (33 per cent) reported feeling a lack of respect in their occupation, with a higher proportion among domestic workers, head loaders and waste pickers (34–38 per cent).

While more than 50 per cent sex workers reported that their children were not aware of their occupation, 5 per cent head loaders and 10 per cent of sanitation workers also reported the same.

Only 42 per cent of workers in our sample knew of any specific schemes pertaining to their occupation by the respective organisations, while only 10 per cent knew of such schemes run by the government.

It is important to note that the precarious and stigmatising nature of their labour is rigid, leading to it becoming generational and ghettoised. Further, a majority of workers come from specific lower castes.

Educational status of the respondents' children

Seventy per cent of workers reported that their income is not adequate to educate their children. Forty seven per cent reported that the nature of their work and work hours affects their children's educational opportunities and progress. In particular, 64 per cent of brick kiln workers reported this. Fifty-seven per cent have taken a loan or borrowed money for their children's education. Eighty-nine per cent reported that they keep track of their child's progress in school. Fifty-four per cent attended parent–teacher meetings regularly.

Twenty-seven per cent of workers' children study outside the city, with 67 per cent sex workers reporting the same.

Forty-three per cent reported that they needed guidance from someone else for enrolling their child in school or college.

Only 16 per cent reported that their children, who are studying, also contribute to the family financially. While 25 per cent reported that their sons help with housework, 32 per cent reported that their daughters do the same. Meanwhile, only 11 per cent reported that their sons help with paid work and 4 per cent reported that their daughters help with paid work. Even the proportion of children helping parents in their work was low, with 5 per cent for sons and 4 per cent for daughters.

Only 41 per cent believed that it is only because of government schemes that their children can avail education.

In terms of schooling of children, 55 per cent attend Marathi medium schools/colleges and 24 per cent attend English medium schools/colleges. Forty-nine per cent of the students attend government schools/colleges and 47 per cent attend aided schools/colleges. Forty-nine per cent have to walk to school/college.

Thus, there are several economic hurdles and struggles for precarious workers in getting their children educated.

Intergenerational educational inequalities

Our findings revealed intergenerational educational mobility in terms of schooling. The proportion of family members who went to school has increased from the workers' grandparents' generation, to that of uncles/aunt to that of cousins (see Table 7). We have observed that across all occupations, only 26 per cent of family members above the age of 20 are illiterate.

Table 7: Schooling across generations (figures in percentage)

Occupational Group	Grandmother	Grand father	Uncle	Aunt	Male In-laws	Female In-laws	Cousins
Brick kiln worker	14	14	43	41	42	62	71
Domestic worker	9	16	43	43	72	54.5	64
Headload worker	0	2.5	34	20.5	60	51	59
Sanitation worker	7	17	48	34	79	59	73
Sex worker	4	6.6	18	13	47	43	56
Waste picker	2	6	28.5	17	53	35.5	42.5

Source: Compiled by authors

However, the overall educational levels are very low, with 54 per cent of family members not even having passed Class 10, 39 per cent who have passed Class 10 but do not hold a degree, and only 7 per cent being degree holders.

Table 8: Educational level of family members who had completed their education (figures in percentage)

Educational Level	Female	Male	Total
Primary school (Class 1–4)	6.95	6.06	13.01
Middle school (Class 5–7)	13.55	6.42	19.96
Secondary school (Class 8–9)	9.98	11.05	21.03
Passed Class 10	8.91	11.76	20.68
Higher secondary school (Class 11–12)	6.42	6.60	13.01
Incomplete bachelor's degree	3.03	2.14	5.17
Bachelor's degree	2.14	2.14	4.28
Master's degree	0.36	0.53	0.89
Doctoral/professional/diploma/technical degree	1.25	0.71	1.96
Grand Total	52.58	47.42	100.00

Source: Compiled by authors

Further, we found that brick kiln workers, domestic workers and waste pickers have immediate family members who are in the same occupation.

In this context, the next section looks at the educational inequalities and struggles of first-generation learners.

UNDERSTANDING EDUCATIONAL INEQUALITIES: PARENTAL OCCUPATION AND CULTURAL CAPITAL OF FIRST-GENERATION LEARNERS

This section examines how higher education has been perceived as a medium through which one can thrive for economic as well as social mobility; and how young adults whose parents are engaged in occupations that are stigmatised both in terms of caste and labour look at higher education as the only opportunity to facilitate mobility. Through FGDs and life narratives of young adults from the six selected occupational groups, an attempt has been made to understand their educational trajectory in terms of parental expectations and how they perceive it. This helped us in understanding their perception of education, the challenges they face in choosing a stream of study, in completing the admissions process and their degree, and finally in getting employment. This process of inquiry underlines their struggle to facilitate entry into spaces of higher education and the difficulties they face in negotiating with teachers, peers and institutional procedures.

This section explores the different challenges encountered by first-generation learners belonging to marginalised communities. The nature of these challenges are not limited to academic difficulties, but are rooted social and cultural prejudices held against them. Several studies on the academic status of marginalised groups have underlined several forms of exclusion and the limitation of the narrative of educational access. These studies recommend that it is important to develop theoretical frameworks that can explain why marginalised groups are still on the periphery of higher education institutes; why their problem intensifies when attempts are made to climb up the academic hierarchy where the discourse of merit is invoked to exclude those who are just entering these institutes. As argued by Sukumar (2013), the definition of merit has fed into the myth of the “family farm”, which includes family background, economic occupation, geographical location and so on. In a caste-based society, such privileges are only available to few upper-caste groups and this further marginalises those who are struggling to access the space and use it to achieve social and class mobility. Several studies have been undertaken on higher education and the challenges faced by marginalised groups. Recent studies (Deshpande, 2013; John, 2012; Rao, 2012; Sukumar, 2013), however, have underlined that there is a need to place this question in the context of different systems and structures, which intersect with caste and gender to further underline the complexity of challenges faced and problematise the narrative of merit. These studies also strongly emphasise the problem of focusing only on causes and consequences of academic failure or “social adjustment issues” of students coming from marginalised groups. Rao (2012) argues that there is a need to explore how students from marginalised groups experience academic failure and how higher education institutions become a site for structural discrimination and labelling. Rao also stresses on how the academic journey of a student from a marginalised caste is dependent upon their familial and social

locations and occupational background, which produce stigma, both social and an embodied one. It is, therefore, important to delineate the everyday experiences of students to understand how their caste, parental occupations and neighbourhood affects their experiences of higher education and produces adverse conditions to fulfil their aspirations of mobility through higher education.

We aim to describe the experience of young adults in the space of higher education. The section discusses how experiences of these young adults is shaped by “non-academic” factors, which have significant impact on their academic success. These experiences are fundamentally connected to their caste and the occupational background of their parents, which is not only related to income poverty but also the social stigma attached to the work they are doing. We attempt to understand the ways in which these young adults understand this stigma and find ways to negotiate it. The cultures of these young adults are examined in the context of their neighbourhood and the peer group with reference to stigmatised occupations of their parents. An attempt has been made to understand the lived experiences of individuals, which is constitutive of persons subjectivity, mainly how people make sense of their situation (Thanpan, 2005). The experiences of young adults have been analysed to understand how they articulate their struggle, how their families, occupational groups and communities shape the struggles of these first-generation college students seeking to break the vicious intergenerational cycle of inequalities. The analysis helps to understand how parents and their children perceive their entry into spaces of higher education.

Parents’ Perception of Education

Parents struggle to educate their children against all odds to keep them away from the stigma of their occupation. Education is perceived by them as a way to a life of dignity for their children, family, and the next generation. Almost all of them responded to the survey questions about what education means for them and their children by hoping “*changla job milel [one would get good job]*”. This was often followed by “*amhi kela te kaam nahi karav lagnar [one child would not have to do the work that we parents do]*”, sometimes articulated clearly as “*ghaan kaam [dirty work]*” or “*amhi je kasht kele te tyanchya nashibala nahi yenar [the hard work that we did will not be their destiny]*”. The parents see education as a means to change their life conditions, often in terms of change of neighbourhood. Sometimes the changes envisaged once their children are educated include concrete desires such as owning a car or a house, having access to good healthcare, having a government job or business, becoming a police officer, a doctor or an IAS officer; or in moral terms, such as helping the poor, having good values, good manners, good thoughts, not being a drunkard like their father, not going onto a wrong path, becoming ideal for siblings and others. Often their expectations from education are more abstract, such as independence, earning more, safety, achieve status in the society, that is, be accomplished, happiness, understanding the world, progress, choices, opportunities, and fulfilling dreams. Many sex workers often hope that education would mean good marriage for their daughters and sons so that they would not be alone. There have an immense sense of pride about their children and also about themselves. They responded by saying that their child’s good education and good work would relieve them of their arduous and stigmatising work, and would change their living conditions. They also shared the efforts and struggles in educating their children. The pride is often expressed as “*abhimaan [pride]*”, “*bhaari vatata [feels great]*”, “*collar tight*”, “*taath maan [head up]*”. We often heard remarks like: “*I won’t be able to work when I am exhausted, I will relax then*”; “*Others will know how much we have toiled*”; “*People will value me, give me respect, then I will feel proud*”. There does not appear to be any apathy or aversion to educating girl children; rather they have enthusiasm and pride

about their girl children. However, life narratives reveal that girls often feel restricted by their parents to pursue the education they desire. The survey data reveals that except for one parent—who expressed the futility of educating daughters since their education may benefit her conjugal family and not them—most parents saw hope in their daughter's education. Though gendered hopes for their children's education are rare, a sense of hopelessness is also discernible, as expressed by a brick kiln worker, *"There can be hurdles in the future, rich people don't allow poor to move forward, one gets job after paying bribe, we won't be able to do that"*. Another Dalit sanitation worker said, *"There is a lot of casteism there. There is casteism everywhere. Babasaheb did not do all this for some people, it's for everyone. Even degrees can be sold and got. I know about all of it"*. Some are sceptical about whether their children would look after them once educated; some left it to destiny and fate; and some think that though their children did not study much, their future generations would be educated.

We see a complicated entanglement of individual desire, family mobility and materialist aspirations, alongside the deep aspiration to live with dignity and the desire to be rid of the stigma associated with caste and occupation. The life narratives of children reveal a persistent concern for employment and mobility, often leading them to take up vocational courses positioned as neoliberal aspiration for an instrumental view of education. Central to parental concern is, however, the desire and struggle to keep their children away from their stigmatised occupation and life circumstances.

Neighbourhood: Shaping/Obstructing the Educational Journey

Life narratives highlight the role of the non-academic environment that not only influences the opportunities and exposure that individuals get, but also shapes their peer group. These young adults try to make sense of their social and familial background to understand their location. Their articulation of their neighbourhood is very complex and ambiguous as they are worried about their peers and teachers knowing about where they live. This compels them to disassociate themselves from their place of residence. This creates issues related to sense of belonging, which actually gives individuals a sense of identity and solidarity with a group. Thus, while they speak about the neighbourhood, they do talk about the anxiety of disclosing it but are also very apprehensive about this anxiety. This ambiguity underlines that they are not confused about their position, but the neighbourhood in which they live is marked as dirty and precarious. This not only deprives them of necessary social and cultural capital, but also marks them different/lowly by society.

Arati from the domestic workers' group from lower class settlement of Pune city said,

I feel that we would not have lived in the basti.... I never told my friends where I live. I know that I maintain decent standard, my house inside is clean, but still I do not want others to know where I live as I am not sure about it. I wish that I lived in some other place. Means not like I don't like this place still.... As we say that what I got now if I would have got it sometime before....And I need to be financially strong.

This shows that these young adults are aware about the specificity of their location, the limitations it produces and delays in getting necessary opportunities. They also often hide the fact of their parents' occupation. Another respondent, Rena, from the sex workers' groups said,

We live here is the only problem ... afraid of telling that I live in this area ...nothing else still ... There is no problem as such but men stare at you ... they think that you are also in that profession ... don't feel good about it.

Responses like this clearly indicate that these young adults have apprehension about where they live and what their parents and people around them are doing, as every day they cross the boundaries and return back to their world. As argued by scholars, this mobility should dismantle segregation, which is not happening. The space of higher education needs to facilitate it with actually enabling these young adults to achieve intergenerational mobility and also create the space to articulate their experience of subordination and address their feeling of "lack" (Deshpande, 2013).

The respondents' perception about the neighbourhood and the home is always relative. Most of them have asserted that they do mix with friends who are from different castes/class backgrounds, but they consciously keep distance and avoid going for private functions like birthday celebrations, housewarming parties or religious festivities. We see that there is a combination of avoiding going to their place or inviting them to their house as there are restrictions placed on them by their parents. These restrictions are placed more on girls as families are worried about their safety and security. Prapti daughter of the waste picker for instance told us,

Generally, I don't go out with my friends as my parents don't like it.... [in a lower voice she said] Only once did I go to my friend's farmhouse with a group of friends without telling parents.... When one of my friends came home, my mother told me not to invite her again.

Most of them also use strategies such as not making any close friends, or avoid talking to them about personal things so as to not reveal too much information about their life at home. One respondent, The Monka (to protect the identity of the respondent original names were changed) from the sex workers' group, said, *I personally don't like to be close with anyone.... If I make friends, I need to remember what I have told to whom ... it becomes very confusing ... so it is better to be friends only while you are actually in the college space.*

It is interesting to note that most respondents express the desire to build friendships with students from diverse groups. Yet, there is an overwhelming feeling of being left out when we had these conversations. The Monka continued,

It feels good to talk to the girl who is scholarly and helpful ... I feel good with them. Get the feeling of what is a good house/family.... They invite me to their place but I can't invite them to mine.

Such narratives underline that they have their reservations about their neighbourhood and how their friends will look at them, so most of them avoid such exchanges. This has definite impacts on their opportunities to learn social skills that are required to enhance future opportunities. Most of these young adults also tend to be engaged in part-time work to support their education and other expenses which leaves them with no time to engage in extracurricular activities or spending time with their friends.

Our interactions revealed that by consciously excluding themselves from situations such as avoiding discussion on parents or not inviting friends to their house, they skilfully manage situations where the stigma attached to their parents' occupation or caste or their neighbourhood is apparent. They are also used to hiding their parents' occupation, as Janaki, daughter of a sanitation worker, told us:

My father was sweeper. His uniform was khaki which is similar to the police, so friends used to ask me if he is in police, and I used to say, yes, he is in police.... But I knew who he is.

Similarly, one of our FGD participants from the sex workers' group said,

One day when my friends saw my father in sweepers uniform. They started asking me questions and later they gathered who he is. Then they pitied me ... which I hated. However, after my mother told me that tell them what work he is doing and how important it is for health and hygiene ... things changed.

Living through such deceptions affects the self-image of these children and forces them to accept that they are considered inferior by society. Anjali, another sex worker's daughter, explained, "It is a torture. Whenever you get introduced to new person you have to lie about at least one thing".

Academic Journey: Locating the Role of Teachers and Institutions

Most of the young adults we spoke to did not have any institutional support or guidance when they entered the higher education academic space. There is a complete absence of institutional support structures for them, and so they are forced to rely on either coaching centres, which are privately run and unaffordable, or online content on platforms such as YouTube, which have their own limitations. In their narratives, all of them have highlighted that they face difficulties in accessing content and managing the pace of academic life. However, they do not view it as institutional failure, but rather individual failure. At the same time, most of them did complain that they get less attention from teachers who only pay attention to meritorious students. Jyostna daughter of the domestic worker said,

Those girls who used to talk nicely with teachers and were scholars, they used to get all the attention from the teacher. We just got taught by them ... we never got any guidance related to career.

Interestingly, many of them also felt that they used to get at least some help from teachers in schools, but this is not the case in college. Anjali elaborated,

School was different ... teachers there were more approachable ... I had friends.... Some teachers used to ask us about our background, tell us why we need to study hard.... In the school strict discipline was there.

They also highlighted how this affected their learning process. Most of them lost interest in learning as they felt alienated and ended up either dropping out or finished school with average performance. It was also highlighted that in private schools, students got more attention and thus could retain interest. Reshma daughter of the brick kiln worker said,

In government schools, the number of students is more, so teachers can't give more attention, but in private schools, number of students are less so teachers can give attention.

They have also expressed regrets about not been able to complete their degree or having taken extra time to complete it. Janaki said,

Now, when I look at my friends who are doing better, I feel bad and I always think that my life would have also been better if I have completed my TY [third year]... I would have got good post, but now I cannot do anything.

This directly affects what they can achieve after completing the degree. Thus, most of them have mentioned how academically they are not well equipped and lack competency in the job market. In this regard, it also important to underline that few of them who received guidance from their teachers are doing good and express how that gave them confidence. Aarohi daughter of the headloader said,

I had good teachers and education. My teachers encouraged me to do good work ... after I got good grades, they also gave me the honour of hoisting the flag, after I scored good marks in 10th board exam.

This not only highlights that there are very few teachers who encourage these students, but that the lack of guidance is due to the fact that “we were different, we were not like others”. Most respondents talked about the caste-based discrimination and differential treatment they receive from both teachers and peers. Dada, a brick kiln worker, said,

There are boys ... boys who are from upper castes ... they think twice before talking to us ... or having food with us.... They don't explicitly talk about it, but we can feel it ... you know one can sense it.

Such behaviour is quite discouraging. Students who have attended schools or colleges where everyone belongs to the same caste and class tend to share things with each other. However, when they enter spaces where students come from diverse backgrounds, caste and class bias affects their everyday interactions. Studies on state of students from marginalised groups in higher education have highlighted that there is a sense of superiority exhibited against the stigmatised by those who are not. This feeling of being marked as inferior, getting targeted due to their caste/occupation generates feelings of anger, dejection and isolation (Rao, 2013). The narratives collected echoed the same feeling. Their sense of humiliation is very clear, yet disguised by brushing it as natural or routine, which then results in them losing interest in education without recognising its caste and class dimension. The participants of the FGD with the domestic workers group have highlighted the importance of being comfortable in the space.

How we are in comfort zone till 10th ... but when you are out of that and if you are unable to create same comfort zone, then you start avoiding going to college. You don't talk to teachers and then you start taking a back seat and lose all opportunities.

Another participant confided,

I am afraid to go to school.... The students are doing whatever they want ... teachers don't scold them ... they come and go whenever they want ... so I feel very scared

There is a sense of insecurity stemming from everyday experiences and lack of institutional support that is common across these occupational groups. This also affects their hard-earned opportunities just because there is lack of clarity about the procedures. It helps the systems to hide behind organisational protocols and sustain caste and gender-based hegemony. A blatant example of this is how due to non-availability of required documents such as caste certificate, one may be forced to forgo admission through reservations. In this relatively small sample as well, we found that a few of them have to let go of their admission and pay high fees. A respondent from the sex workers' group said,

I passed 12th standard, cleared CET and got admission ... where I had to produce a caste certificate.... I have applied for it, submitted all the necessary documents but I couldn't get it in time ... so I have to take admission in open category.

Such accounts reiterate the fact that it is not enough to have policies and provisions to facilitate the entry of marginalised people into spaces of higher education. The education system also needs to be committed to contest deep-seated economic and social inequalities. Those who are marginalised will not be empowered if they remain stuck in systems that do not challenge the deep rooted hierarchies and power structures that perpetuate their exploitation (Chopra & Jeffery, 2005).

Young Adults and their Families

All the young adults we interviewed across the six groups emphasised how they and their parents aspire for a better future mainly through education as this would lead to upward social and economic mobility. They spoke about the pressure they felt, not due to parental expectations, but due to the complete lack of institutional support in such competitive environments. Reshma echoed this sentiment:

I get no advice or help from my family in terms of choosing courses They offer all other help ... they give me money to buy books and notebooks.

The respondents of our study had inherited no social/cultural capital. Usually, the peer group and the home are informal arenas where learning takes place; more specifically, these spaces and groups support students, strengthen their potential to avail opportunities. However, in the absence of any social and economic privileges, the young adults we spoke to are constantly aware of the financial situation in their homes and its impact on their education. A respondent from the waste pickers' focus group said,

We feel that if our parents were educated, they would have got good payment. If parents are educated, they send their children to good school, they send their children to dance, sports etc.... It is not that we don't get anything but still feel that we are lagging behind

This and other similar accounts show that these young adults already feel that they are lagging behind and have no support from the family. Education is seen as a harbinger of change by their families and parents remain optimistic about their children's future. Despite the sacrifices they make, social transformation is dependent on various things. A respondent from the waste pickers' group said,

"It is difficult for my parents to pay the fees ... I have younger siblings ... my parents need to think about their needs also".

To make ends meet, these students take up part-time work: they work on farms back in their village, or work in offices, or as delivery persons. This inevitably leads to missing classes and impacting their performance in college. Dada said, *"I work for Zomato ... I also work for Amazon, mostly on Saturday-Sunday ... then on week days I study"*. In a similar vein, Apeksha from the waste pickers' group said, *"When I went to senior college, I started working to support my education.... I worked for telemarketing and as a sales girl"*.

In the case of young adult women, the challenges of early marriage, excessive surveillance and negotiations with the family also need to be accounted for. These women highlighted how they use education as a reason to postpone marriage. Yet, most of them accept their parents' decisions regarding the course of education and time of marriage. For instance, Aarohi confessed to us:

I actually wanted to join a beautician course ... but my father was against it so I said anyways, I will do what he wants ... that is also not bad ... now I am engaged and my in-laws are not against my doing the beautician course, so after marriage I might do the course and do it part time.

The surveillance on them is more complicated as it intersects with where they are living, what their parents are doing and the patriarchal prejudice about women. Thus, several restrictions are placed on these girls and their mothers in patriarchal heterosexual families. If there is no dire need for women to earn, then they are not allowed to work. Aarohi continued, *"My mother is not working since my father does not like her working outside"*.

These women have also expressed how they need to follow certain rules in order to continue their education and go outside the house. A respondent from the waste pickers' group said,

In college we can do anything, but when we come near our homes ... if someone sees us with someone then they think about it very differently.... They might feel that I am in a relationship with that boy ... they will create issue.

Many of them share these experiences. Apeksha said that her mother *"just says that, do what you want, but before doing anything, think about honour of the family"*. Aarohi also explained how freedom is negotiated and compromised with the family: *"I got a phone only after I got engaged"*.

In addition to studying, these women do paid work after college to support themselves and then help their mothers with domestic work. While describing their routine, domestic work appears as a natural

part of their routine, which is mostly absent in the narratives of young adult men. Mani from the headload workers' group narrated,

"I help my mother in kitchen ... and she also takes orders on a food delivery app, which I help with ... I have also completed a beautician course, so I do that also".

Despite these all challenges, those who can complete their degrees struggle to find employment that can facilitate social mobility for their family. In case of girls, a greater challenge is that after struggling to access educational spaces, if they get married before completing education, the completion of their course depends on their husband or in-laws; and if they have completed their education, whether they are allowed to work or not is yet another hurdle to cross. Most of the narratives also highlighted how they are compelled to select certain streams or courses which will get them a job and in little time. We must note that parents specifically dictate what their daughters can do. Many young adult women have mentioned how they wanted to be beauticians but were forbidden by their parents and were advised to take up an office job, which according to them has more permanency and prestige. These women also expressed their desire to be air hostesses, to be part of the hospitality industry or to play sports like karate but they could not convince their parents. They also could not find it difficult to pay the high fees as the institutes that offer such courses are private run. These girls look at their career options as an opportunity to accomplish their aspirations, but they find it difficult due to financial constraints and restrictions by the family.

Role of Organisations and Unions

Workers' organisations play a major role in facilitating intergenerational mobility for communities engaged in stigmatised occupations. They campaign for better working conditions, fair payment and policies that consciously building educational support programmes for the children of their members. Among the groups we engaged with, the waste pickers' organisation, sex workers' organisation, brick kiln workers' organisation and head loaders' organisation had addressed these issues. They provide support in the form of counselling, actual help in selecting courses and most importantly, providing financial assistance. They stand in for the institutional support that should ideally have come from higher education institutes. For example, Reshma said, *"My organisation supported my education since 1st standard ... My karate class fees were also paid by the organisation"*. Similarly, Maya from the waste pickers' group said that her organisation *"helped me to fill forms online ... to open bank account ... The members of the organisation came with us to banks and offices, especially during corona times"*.

All our respondents have acknowledged that they not only received financial help, but also received assistance with selecting schools and streams, navigating the online admissions process, and obtaining mobile phones when classes went online. For young women, especially whose mothers are engaged in sex work, the organisation helps them find schools and talk to teachers so that the identity of their mothers remains secret. Waste pickers' organisations also run de-addiction programmes for young adults and promote young men to continue their education.

Maya from the waste pickers' group said,

In bastis, boys do get addicted ... neglect education ... the organisation convenes meetings once in a month to discuss problems and what can be done ... if they are addicted to alcohol, smoking, they work with them to rehabilitate them.

Monka from the waste pickers' group said,

These young children also contribute to organisational work and learn many things ... I get to know what are the issues ... How does one think and so on.

Our interactions with the heads of these organisations underlined that all they have all attempted to address the issue of children's education. They have programmes to address educational needs in form of financial help, counselling, and providing hostel facilities, among others. This further indicates how these communities recognise higher education as a medium through which one can achieve social, cultural and economic mobility.

The experiences narrated in this study underscore the fact that processes of social exclusion continue to operate within everyday contexts of higher education institutions and further structural discrimination. The academic and social achievements of marginalised students are impacted by the way social groups are organised and interact within different social structures. While the young adults we interviewed skilfully manage amidst their circumstances, the stigma of their parents' occupation continues to loom over their life. Despite belonging to different occupational groups, we found similarities in how they articulate their situation and the disadvantages they face but also identify themselves as responsible for their situation. In the case of young adults whose parents are either sanitation workers and waste pickers, the stigma is more embodied and intersects with caste. Some have spoken of the humiliation they have faced as a result. In the case of sex workers, the stigma restrains their children from accepting any connection with them. To not express love and belonging in public is a conscious choice for both, which is emotionally damaging and makes it harder for them to deal with their challenges without the help of workers' organisations. In case of brick kiln workers, head loaders and domestic workers, the stigma is more in terms of the nature of work, poverty, and their migrant status.

Therefore, it is important to acknowledge that education does have transformative potential and the promise of mobility. However, it remains true that educational institutes are also complicit in producing inclusion and success for some and instilling a sense of failure/exclusion for others. This is especially evident in Indian society, where social and economic inequalities are intertwined and educational structures end up reproducing those inequalities. Thus, at this juncture, pedagogic and non-pedagogic practices and institutional practices need to be radically restructured to create an environment that can be egalitarian for all and also will consciously break the systems and structures which strengthen the discriminatory practices. It needs to commit itself to create systems to facilitate social and class mobility of marginalised and stigmatised communities and invert questions related to who is disadvantaged/marginalised and instead ask the question who has produced this disadvantage and why some are still on margins. By applying a more critical lens, we would be able to answer these difficult questions and aim to build more just and equal society.

PEDAGOGIES FOR RESEARCHING THE MARGINALISED

We draw from Sharmila Rege's proposal of Phule-Ambedkarite feminist (PAF) pedagogical practice to create the space for teaching methodologies for field research. These pedagogic practices emerged as a response, to the "talking back" of Dalit and Bahujan students post the 1990s on the question of identity in higher education and the concurrent inability of dominant disciplinary spaces in the social sciences to address this question of identity and then hiding their fear of identity under the question of language of education. Thus, the marginalisation experienced by Dalit Bahujan students is often masked under the "inability" to engage with English as the language of education. The Phule-Ambedkarite feminist pedagogies advocated for deeper engagement with the subjectivities and identities of students and teachers to rethink issues in epistemology and pedagogy. These are located in the subversive Phule-Ambedkarite perspectives on education, knowledge and truth-seeking that take on the power and its relationship with knowledge and envision education as the practice as freedom. They dissent with dominant knowledges and cultures of learning and challenge the assumed binaries of Western theory/indigenous ideas, public/private knowledges, reason/emotion and objectivity/subjectivity in knowing. They interrogate the authority and control of the canon and the teacher and seek to create classroom as the space of passion, partnership with diverse students, confrontation and uncertainty of what is learnt.

In the last two decades, the public university has emerged as a space that produces dissent; as an embattled and intimate space (Arunima, 2017) that questions institutional and pedagogic violence. Some significant protests include the Rohith Vemula case, the MeToo movement, the List of Sexual Harassment Accused and NALSA. These incidents unpacked the pervasiveness and routineness of alienation and hostility, in terms of caste and heteropatriarchy, foregrounding the affective dimensions of institutional violence. This dominant aesthetic of the university devalues bodies of living and breathing Dalits as odd and abnormal, who become visible only with death and brutal violence (Bargi, 2017; Thirumal & Christy, 2018). It negates their identity and embodied presence inside and outside the classroom and disallows them the pursuit of an intellectual life and radical equality. In this context, we ask, can we think of critical empathy as a tool to talk across everyday distance and disaffection in the affective economy of the university, as a tool to reflect over and challenge existing hegemonic knowledges and pedagogic practices?

We understand the promise of empathy, cultivated through critical pedagogies for self and social transformation. Empathy implies imaginatively experiencing the feelings, thoughts and situations of others, an intimate fellowship and interconnectedness with others, which is non-verbal, affective, bodily. However, we also recognise the precarious dimensions of empathy in liberal, multi-cultural and cosmopolitan discourses where choosing to extend empathy by the privileged subjects may become an act of assertion of power and the silencing of marginalised subjects. It may entail projection of the privileged self on the less privileged other, and appropriation of their subjugated knowledge. With the craze to develop empathy in the schools, non-profits, NGOs, human resource management and so on, empathy has become a deliberately cultivated skill-set of the entrepreneurial self. We therefore recognise these material conditions in which empathy is entangled, and are cautious about any universalising call for empathy in the neoliberal university. We draw from the works of Carolyn Pedwell (2012) and Michalinos

Zembylas (2019), who talk of alternative, decolonial, critical empathy, which is not premised on taken-for-granted positive emotions of care, concern and sympathy towards the other. But it involves affective as well as reflexive practices that ask subjects to implicate themselves in the process of knowledge production, and to account for their own complicity in perpetuating coloniality and social hierarchies. As Pedwell argues, “Empathy is not just about attempting to ‘know’ or ‘feel’ how another feels, to put oneself in ‘the other’s shoes’, but about seeking to understand the structures of feeling and the feelings of structure that produce and mediate us differentially as subjects and communities who feel” (Pedwell, 2012b, p. 294). This empathy is deeply confrontational, and moves away from the emotional equivalence between the privileged empathiser and the less privileged empathised. It involves complex processes of confrontation, conflict and negotiation and solidarity. It also involves a sense of shame, which is not an easy emotion to experience or navigate through, but acknowledging it may have transformative potential.

In an interesting essay on Caste violence, Shivani Kapoor (2018) analyses the “impossibility” of empathy in the terrain of caste due to distrust and disgust for Dalits, who are considered inferior; as caste norms are fundamentally set against any sort of emotional or material sharing or understanding across castes. Further, Gopal Guru (2002) has pointed out the limits to empathy, the epistemic violence in appropriation of epistemically invested Dalit/marginalised voice by the empathetic privileged voice. Thus, thinking and writing empathetically and forming solidarities with other, without either overpowering her, or appearing too distant, is difficult. However, Rege underlines the significance of critical empathy for not making caste a burden of only Dalit woman. In the context of the List controversy, Drishadwati Bargi (2017) also calls upon the privileged subjects in university, feminists to interrogate their so-called sublimated, caste-less, anonymous, unmarked bodies. Both Rege and Pedwell ask for recognising oneself as implicated in the social forces, that create the climate of obstacles the other must confront (Pedwell, 2016, p. 33). They urge for dialogic engagement and self-reflexivity on the terms set by the marginalised, when they place the burden of empathy on the privileged.

We constructed our research process as a space for learning to do research reflexively. We identified three narratives in this process of developing critical empathy amongst student interns researching first-generation learners.

Narrative 1: Of Betrayal and Guilt

In the first two debrief/reflexive meetings with our students when they were conducting a household survey in informal settlements of Pune, we were struck and baffled by an overwhelming reiteration of guilt by them about researching the marginalised, about “exploiting” them by taking their time and encroaching upon their privacy. The feeling of guilt was expressed through anger at us, a sense of betrayal for sending them “unprepared” to the field. Initially, some of us were defensive as we believed we had ticked all the check boxes of the preparation for survey and field work. However, the reflexive discussions enabled us to understand their sense of guilt about their privilege in the field, as against largely an absence of guilt in their everyday of life in neoliberal times; their bodily discomfort in visiting poor and crowded neighbourhoods, public spaces, and small houses where private/public division was not clear, going straight from the privacy of their homes during their online education. The post-pandemic loss of livelihood had exacerbated the struggle for survival of informal workers, in which their organisations, unprepared to deal with the changing situation, could provide little support. This led to the peculiar reluctance of workers to this survey who were

even otherwise over-researched in the post-pandemic context. We were not attentive to these concerns in our earlier discussion interviews with key persons and leaders of these organisations.

Throughout the discussion, a reiteration of the term “guilt” was observed, which was then noted by some of the student interns as a vague articulation of a complex set of subjective and nuanced feelings that the research interns were experiencing through their fieldwork, especially with regard to their social position, class and caste differences as well as previous lack of fieldwork. “Many people (survey respondents) asked what they would gain from these interviews: whether governmental aid, or monetary aid from schools/organisations. There was a sense of realisation during the meeting that the workers have been subjected to much research (such as interviews, surveys etc.) before. It has made them constant subjects of knowledge-making processes while not really receiving much in return. In some ways, they were constantly objectified. The surveyors (student interns) were almost always unable to give an answer to those questions, furthering their “guilt” (Debrief meeting of researchers, 10 May 2022).

Often research interns were seen struggling with the interviews and were found not being able to adjust to lives that looked different from their own. To be able to create a safe environment for the respondents themselves, it is necessary to train interviewers not solely in terms of the interview process but also otherwise. To understand the process of entering someone else’s home and to see it as not just a place of research. For instance, one of the interns’ field notes said: *I was hesitant to ask about her experience of stigma in school, as earlier I would hesitate to ask about caste*” (Fieldnote by Nilima of Sonali’s (SWG) life narrative, 10 January, 2023). This collective discussion and reflection on their individual experience of the field led the researchers to question the utility of the survey as a tool because it seemed to disallow any voice and agency to respondents in its structured frame. Though survey as a research method is used in demographic studies of specific groups, especially marginalised groups, in creating their social profile quantitatively, it was our oversight to use the survey to investigate stigma, which is subjective in nature. For instance, the mobilisation of workers by the organisations we partnered with did not always address caste as constituting their stigmatising work. Hence, questions around caste and stigma were also received awkwardly by the respondents. The reflexive exercise with researchers led us to rethink a quantitative approach to the study of stigma and politics of informal work.

The researchers discussed questions related to caste and respect wherein they would often feel a certain discomfort, scared that such questions would offend the respondents. Therefore, a point with regard to the methodological validity of such questions was raised. Further, one of the researchers shared her experience in the field when, while asking one of the respondents if majority of people in their occupation belong to their specific caste, a person who was not giving the interview got offended, after which the researcher had to explain to them the reasoning behind asking such a question. The researcher then questioned the methodological nature of such questions and whether or not they are necessary for more extensive research (Debrief meeting of researchers, 10 June, 2022).

Narrative 2: Of Comfort and Listening

We could see a critical shift in the affective understanding of our students in the field, with confrontation and reflection over guilt and empathy, and critical discussion over conducting and listening to life narratives, as they went to interview first-generation college-goers whose worlds they shared in some

ways if not others. Not only could they visit the same neighbourhoods and homes and their private worlds with comfort and affinity, and chat and laugh with them over tea, snacks and trivia; but they could also see how these young people narrate and view their life stories, and then they could make sense of their own worlds in comparison to the worlds of these first-generation learners.

Throughout the interview, Janaki hammered on the point that she wanted to continue her education and that she would excel in the outside world, while also praising her in-laws and her new family. To me, it felt as if Jai was taking this space and trying to convey these points to her mother-in-law who was sitting in the same room. She wanted them to know that she was grateful for her family, but that she needed to study further and her reasons for it. 'I don't want to go to college because there are friends there, but because I want to study, because now I understand that education is everything and without education, you are nothing'. She said this to enhance her point towards her mother-in-law. (Fieldnote by Samika of Janaki's (daughter of a sanitation worker) life narrative, 14 October, 2022)

One can see his conflicting opinions while talking about education. On the one hand he was talking about the futility of education in getting a job, and hence he was pulled towards starting a petty business. Earning was important for him, and he was concerned about letting his mother do arduous work. He chose working for the café that he had started with his brother. He also seemed to enjoy doing that. He spoke about it with a lot of excitement. At the same time, he also shared that he was continuing his studies and had taken admission in college. When asked why he pursued education if it is useless, he asserted that degree is important. He thinks that it gives one respect in society. (Fieldnote by Suvarna of Siddhesh's (son of a domestic worker) life narrative, 22 September, 2022)

How many responsibilities she was burdened with at such a young age! The responsibilities to protect and sustain the family based on her parents' inter-religious [Hindu-Muslim] marriage, to complete schooling without going wayward, to go to school without disclosing her identity, to not hurt her parents who had toiled hard to educate her! Spending nights at the dargah where she would sleep or in the parking lot where he [her father] worked [her mother being a sex worker], studying in that chaos, completing homework by getting up early if it couldn't be completed in noisy nights. Some of these responsibilities are taken up by children of 'normal' families too. But it is a great moral burden for a young child coming from a family considered as immoral by the hegemonic social order. Shabnam has protected her free soul, her independence in the midst of all this! She has a strong mind and she is resolute to keep it! (Fieldnote by Nilima of Sonali's (daughter of a sex worker) life narrative, 10 January 2023).

However, children who are able to get onto the rail of being upwardly mobile often have to leave everything, including their families and childhood homes behind since that seems to be the only way to be able to "integrate themselves into civil society" (Debrief meeting of researchers, 1 June, 2022).

Assuming that it is only the researcher/interviewer who has the sole agency to be able to ask questions, we see Tejas, son of a sanitation worker, also taking up that agentic space and breaking the power

hierarchy through the interview. He comes off as a confident person, not just through the way he speaks, and interacts but also through his understanding of himself and the world around him, which became extremely visible in the transcription of the interview as well. It was stated that the confidence and sense of equality with which Tejas asked the interviewer questions further makes these qualities very visible (Debrief meeting of researchers, 19 December 2022).

The researchers were intrigued by the immense sense of pride, achievement and hope with which first-generation learners told stories of their educational struggles and aspirations: struggles about their sense of obligation to their parents; indifference and anger towards their schools, college and teachers; the values they accorded to educational NGOs and other private initiatives for education in slums; the role of the workers' organisations in their lives; their perspective of education in terms of dignity and instrumentality; and finally, employability for moving away from their parents' stigmatised occupations. Not only did they read Jai's endeavour and determination to complete education after marriage that she had chosen, and Shabnam's immense burden of a non-normative family, being a sex worker's daughter; but they could also recognise Tejas's navigation with dignity in his assertion of confidence and Vinod's (son of a domestic worker) navigation of employment and dignity through education to free his mother from precarious work. They realize how Tejas asserted equality with the researchers through his engagement with social media, familiarity with English and information that he has about diverse subjects such as mythology through YouTube. However, his excitement about Pinterest, a social media app with majority female users and his ignorance about it reveal the fractures of acquired capital (Debrief meeting of researchers, 19 December, 2022). This reading of navigation of stigma by young people and also their parents through their silences and body language points out the significance of visceral knowing.

We look at some more field notes to illustrate the lives of our respondents.

When Mani was talking about her mother's occupation, she was very enthusiastic, talking in louder voice how her mother is a businesswoman doing a small-scale business of making waffles at home [which is open for online purchase through Swiggy and Zomato] in that pink structure which I had seen just outside their main door. As she talked about her mother's occupation, I could smell chocolate in the waffles which her mother was making after seeing her order alert on her phone. When the interviewer further asked Mani about her father's occupation; her voice became softer, hesitant, shaky. She got emotional too, she cried and then pulled herself up for the interview. She sees her father's occupation with respect but not pride. She is not happy telling people what her father does. She shared that she sometimes watches her father doing his daily work as a head loader, which made her emotional and overwhelmed. (Fieldnote by Shubhanshi of Mani's (daughter of a head load worker) life narrative, 14 October, 2022)

'Everything is normal', Renuka was also reiterating it yesterday, and Shabnam was also doing it continuously today. Both were trying to assert that they are similar to other people in the society, not any different from them. Shabnam scored more as her parents were living together and her father had given her his name. She was thanking Allah for that. She got acceptability and security to have a father's name. (Fieldnote by Nilima of Sonali's (daughter of a sex worker) life narrative, 10 January, 2023)

Within the head loaders community, a certain dissonance between men's caste-based dignity and bodily vulnerability became visible wherein the majority of the men belonged to the Maratha caste, however, at the same time struggled with their physical health. (Debrief meeting note, 1 June 2022)

Narrative 3: Of Reflexive Learning and Connectedness

Cultivating empathy meant learning not only to read the lives and worldviews of others, the meanings that others give to their actions, but also to refrain from projecting their subjective interpretations onto the actions of others. Here are two notes, bringing out conflict in reading queerness in the life narrative of a young woman, living separately, sharing a rented room with her female friend from the same neighbourhood.

Here is the first note from a debrief meeting of the research team in December 2022:

Soon after taking the interview, we realised that Nadira's mother was not a domestic worker and that her experiences were borrowed from Harsha's. Their relationship or bond was not questioned through the interview due to which no analysis could be built around the same....The group felt that Nadira should have been asked the importance of her relationship with Harsha, at least to some extent, to be able to understand this dynamic. The interviewer, however, noted that fear in asking questions around an obviously hidden, yet apparent queer relationship, especially when through the interview, Harsha's insecurities around Nadira became obvious....Upon seeing that the interviewer was uncomfortable asking questions around queerness, the group noticed that having another queer person take that interview would have added comfort and safety for Nadira and unspoken solidarity during the interview, due to which questions could have also been asked with more ease.

Meanwhile, below is the note taken during the life narrative in November 2022:

Nadira mentioned that there were many in the basti who ran away from their home to get married, and hence they were looked down upon. [She was playing with her pendant at this time, which says 'sweetheart']. She said she never shared anything with anyone, not even her mother, but she started sharing everything with Harsha after she came in her life. [It was really a sweet moment.] Nadira seemed concerned about Harsha's actions in this kind of politics [referring to the protest Harsha organised at the petrol pump where they were working about the delay in paying their wages], as she thought Harsha alone can't do much and it needs to be a collective action. While Harsha quite proudly told us about the time she mobilised other workers at the petrol pump, she said that Nadira did not support her. (Fieldnote by Sharvari of Naju's (DWG) life narrative, 10 November, 2022)

Our students were also confused to see respondents refraining from raising caste issues. Parts of our survey were designed to ask about their social background; but many respondents used the caste category question to assert their political identities. This could indicate a lack of differentiation between caste and political identity for them. Their idea of social activism was their caste identity itself (Debrief meeting of researchers, 10 May 2022).

Students noticed reluctance when being asked for full names. This was noted as a symbol of breaking off long-term relationships with the larger understanding of caste. They also observed the difficulty faced in

covering the caste aspect of the respondents' identity due to which, often, the class factor would become more prominent (Debrief meeting of researchers, 10 October, 2022).

It was the relationship between first-generation learner children and their parents that they found most troubling as they had spoken to and interacted with parents during survey, before collating the life narratives of children. They had seen the hopefulness of parents toiling to educate their children; and also a sense of gratefulness and respect that children had for their parents. Yet, they observed silences of children about their mothers, especially (but not only) for sex worker mothers. They were also torn to see loneliness of the children of workers in stigmatised occupations more generally, but of sex workers particularly, as they could not make friends easily due to continuous migration.

Below are field notes from the life narrative of Rena and Pravin respectively:

While she did not seek support in terms of education or resources from her mother, she stated that she was only ever able to confide in her mother and not her father. She stated that she was able to speak with her about boyfriends as well due to the openness of their relationship. (Fieldnote by Nilima of Rena's (daughter of a sex worker) life narrative, 9 January 2023).

Pravin stated how he has never kept any friends for more than 2–3 years; whenever he has shifted town he has thoroughly cut contact with his previous friends. He casually mentioned how he likes it that way as it's less complicated. (Fieldnote by Samika of Pravin's (son of a sex worker) life narrative, 9 January 2023)

The issue of attachment and care became a critical part of the discussion. A student intern recalled one of the women they interviewed in Budhwar Peth who had been sent there to live by her husband. She stated that if living there was good enough for her, it would also be good enough for her children, due to which she would not want to send them away from the locality to study. Through this conversation, members were able to identify the numerous subjective definitions of care that exist and how they varied in each occupational group. For instance, sex workers, who are not involved in their children's lives at all but send all their earnings to the NGOs where their children are living and studying, stand by different definitions of motherhood. At the same time, the question of whether or not it is selfish for sex workers to want to remain with their children was raised, wherein the student interns pointed out that union leaders let women make their own decisions and support them through either choice. Within a similar realm, a point regarding whether or not it is selfish for brick kiln workers to go back to their village for four months of the year, compromising their children's education was raised (Debrief meeting of researchers, 1 June 2022).

They were amazed in relating to the frustrations of young women over compulsions of marriage and consequent material dependency, the inability to pursue the education they desired, and the pressure to assure their parents of their "good femininity".

During the discussion on hereditary (or jobs saved for a family) survey respondentstalked about how they did not want their daughters to work in their occupation, but were very forthcoming that their daughters-in-law will carry forward their occupation. The student interns observed how these daughters-in-laws then

lost their freedom to choose their field of work. They also noted how in most families the daughter-in-law was far more educated compared to the rest of the family and almost always their husband (Debrief meeting of researchers, 10 May, 2022).

Below are field notes from Mani's life narrative:

We stopped the recorder and chatted a bit and our conversation on marriage stretched for a long time. Her mother asked my age and I said '25' Mani looked with a big smile, which had a hint of pride and taunt which she indirectly directed towards her mother. It was more of a, 'See a girl at 25 still studying and not married'. Mani asked me about my university and course and she was surprised to hear such a course (Fieldnote by Shubhanshi of Mani's (daughter of a head load worker) life narrative, 14 October, 2022).

They further connected over experiences of family, specifically based on inter-faith marriage.

Here is another field note from Sonali's life narrative:

This look seemed to say more than just confusion due to a previous discussion that was had during the interview, wherein both of us were able to find commonality in our heritage and able to relate to how one is raised in inter-faith households. During the interview as well, Shabnam seemed to be quite excited to find out this information and found comfort in being able to share more about her experiences of being raised in a peculiar way (Fieldnote by Bhavya of Sonali's (daughter of a sex worker) life narrative, 10 January 2023).

Some students also shared their realisation of the struggles of their middle-class parents to give them desired education after listening to these life narratives. Others questioned class-based cultural capital and parental desire to control their child's future. For instance, many parents were keen on letting their children study what they wanted and showed faith in their choices. A question was raised around this: "Would middle-class families have the same opinions?" (Debrief meeting of researchers, 10 May, 2022). Our journey of developing critical empathy thus involved confrontation, reflection and visceral knowing. We sought critical engagement with the debates on feminist reflexivity, politics of field work and experience. We interacted with the informal workers' organisations and organisations working with urban youth from poor neighbourhoods around questions of education and dignity. We also sought to explore Ambedkarite ideas of *pradnya*, *karuna* and *samata* to think of empathy and reflexivity. This is our effort to work with Phule-Ambedkarite feminist pedagogies.

CONCLUSION

Higher education has come to be recognised as a site of pedagogies of aspiration in neoliberal times as young people are educated to work on themselves, to fashion aspirational selves (Mathew & Lukose, 2020). This building of aspirational mobilities through the project of higher education is seen as unsettling the social reproduction of inequalities of caste and gender that also enables social belonging. The young children of stigmatised workers whom we studied seem to uphold these aspirational mobilities as they struggle to breakthrough intergenerational inequalities and stigma; while higher educational institutions remain apathetic and hostile to their struggles. So, what are the costs of embracing these aspirational mobilities? Young adults and their parents bear these costs for aspiring for “decent” work and a life with dignity. The neglect from teachers and classmates due to chaotic and interrupted educational pathways, anxiety about disclosure of the stigmatised occupation of parents, loneliness in the absence of friends from colleges whose lives are very different from theirs, and also those from their neighbourhoods and communities who are compelled to drop out of education mark the journeys of first-generation college-goers. In the absence of educational institutions, along with families, it is workers’ organisations and unions on one hand, and non-profit organisations, individual charity, and private coaching classes for the poor that come in to support and manage the struggle of first-generation learners for mobility. But does aspirational mobility of individual students assure dignity, a life free from stigma and alienation? Or do we see a kind of disjuncture between aspiration and moral claims of dignity on the site of education? First-generation learners are thus torn between belonging to family and community, and aspiration for mobility.

One key mechanism to challenge the disaffection of young students from socially marginalised communities is pedagogies of critical empathy. Socially diverse, heterogenous classrooms with students and teachers who have uneven privileges and disadvantages need to be transformed to address indignities and disaffection experienced by first-generation college students. In the midst of the “empathy craze” of neoliberal times, it is the confrontation of immobilising guilt about privileges, reflexive listening to the voices and silences of others, and a sense of connectedness and solidarities that can lead to critical empathy. These transformative pedagogies will enable challenging the institutional and epistemic violence experienced by first-generation students.

REFERENCES

- Agarwala, R. (2013). *Informal labor, formal politics, and dignified discontent in India*. Cambridge University Press.
- Arunima, G. (2017). Thought, policies and politics: How may we imagine the public university in India? *Kronos Online*, 43(1), 165–184.
- Bargi, D. (2017). On misreading the Dalit critique of university spaces. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 52(50).
- Bhaskar, A., & Chikarmane, P. (2012). The story of waste and its reclaimers: Organising waste collectors for better lives and livelihoods. *The Indian Journal of Labour Economics*, 55(4), 595–619.
- Bhattacharjee, S., & Team. (2014). *Cleaning human waste: Manual scavenging, caste, and discrimination in India*. Human Rights Watch.
- Chickerur, S. (2020). Brahman women as cultured homemakers – unpacking caste, gender roles and cultural capital across three generations. *Journal of Gender Studies*, 30(4), 417–428.
- Chikarmane, P., Deshpande, M., & Narayan, L. (2001). *Report on scrap collectors, scrap traders and recycling enterprises in Pune*. Geneva ILO-UNDP.
- Chikarmane, P. (2012). *Integrating waste pickers into municipal solid waste management in Pune, India*. WIEGO Policy Brief N° 8.
- Chopra, R., & Jeffery, P. (Eds.). (2005). *Educational regimes in contemporary India*. Sage Publication Pvt Ltd.
- Choukhar, M. (2023, July 14). Caste and habitus part I: The role of cultural capital in perpetuating caste hegemony. *Feminism in India*.
- Davies, S., & Rizk, J. (2017). The three generations of cultural capital research: A narrative review. *Review of Educational Research Journal*, 88, 331–365.
- Deshpande, R. (1999). Organising the unorganised: Case of Hamal Panchayat. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 34(39), 19–26.
- Deshpande, S., & Zacharias, U. (Eds.). (2013). *Beyond inclusion? The practice of equal access in Indian higher education*. Routledge.
- Dumais, S., & Ward, A. (2010). Cultural capital and first generation college success. *Poetics*, 38(3), 245–265.

Goffman, E. (1963). *Stigma: Notes on the management of spoiled identity*. Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, N.J.

Guru, G. (2002). How egalitarian are the social sciences in India? *Economic and Political Weekly*, 37(50), 5003–5009.

John, M. (2012). Gender in higher education in the time of reforms. *Contemporary Education Dialogue*, 9(2), 197–221.

Kapoor, S. (2018). Cast(e) in disgust: Is an empathic reading of caste possible? *Society for the History of Emotions*, 2(2) 256–273.

Lum, K. (2019). The Dalit closet: Managing Dalit identity at an elite university in India. *Critical Education Policy Studies Journal*, 17(1) 120–161.

Mathew, L., & Lukose, R. (2020). Pedagogies of aspiration: Anthropological perspectives on education in liberalising India. *South Asian Studies Journal*, 43(4), 691–704.

Mhaskar, S. (2019). *The state of stigmatized employment in India: Historical injustices of labouring*. Oxfam India.

Moghe, K. (2013). Organising domestic workers in Pune city. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 48(43).

Nambissan, G. (2010). The middle classes and educational advantages and practices. In M. W. Apple, S. J. Ball, & L. A. Gandin (Eds.), *The Routledge International Handbook of the Sociology of Education* (pp. 324–343). Routledge.

Nambissan, G., & Rao, S. (Eds.). (2012). *Sociology of education in India: Changing contours and emerging concerns*. Oxford University Press.

Pedwell, C. (2012a). Affective (self-) transformations: Empathy, neoliberalism and international development. *Feminist Theory*, 13(2), 163–179.

Pedwell, C. (2012b). Economies of empathy: Obama, neoliberalism, and social justice. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 30(2), 280–297.

Pedwell, C. (2016). De-colonising empathy: Thinking affect transnationally. *Samyukta: A Journal of Womens Studies*, 16(1), 27–49.

Shah, A. (2006). The labour of love: Seasonal migration from Jharkhand to the brick kilns of other states in India. *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, 40(1), 91–118.

- Shah, S. (2003). Sex work in the global economy. *New Labor Forum*, 12(1), 74–81.
- Sircar, O., & Dutta, D. (2011). Beyond compassion: Children of sex workers in Kolkata's Sonagachi. *Childhood*, 18(3), 333–349.
- Sukumar, N. (2013). Quota's children: The perils of getting educated. In S. Deshpande & U. Zacharias (Eds.), *Beyond Inclusion The Practice of Equal Access in Indian Higher Education*. Routledge.
- Thapan, M. (2005). Cultures of adolescence: Educationally disadvantaged young women in an urban slum. In R. Chopra & P. Jeffery (Eds.), *Educational Regimes in Contemporary India*. Sage Publications India Pvt Ltd.
- Thirumal, P., & Christy, C. (2018). Why Indian universities are places where Savarnas get affection and Dalit-Bahujans experience distance. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 53(5).
- Thorat, S., & Newman, K. (Eds.). (2010). *Blocked by caste: Economic discrimination in modern India*. Oxford University Press.
- Thorat, S., & Sabharwal, N. (2015). Caste and social exclusion concept, indicators and measurement. In A. Shiva Kumar, P. Rustagi, & R. Subrahmanian (Eds.), *India's Children: Essays on Social Policy*. Oxford University Press.
- Tilak, J. (2015). How inclusive is higher education in India? *Social Change*, 45(2), 185–223.
- Wadhwa, R. (2018). Differential entry of first and non-first-generation students in higher education with reference to India. *Higher Education for the Future*, 5(2), 142–161.
- Walters, V. (2019). Parenting from the "polluted" margins: Stigma, education and social (im) mobility for the children of India's out-casted sanitation workers. *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, 42 (1), 51–68.
- Zembylas, M. (2019). Reinventing critical pedagogy as decolonizing pedagogy: The education of empathy. *The Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies*, 40(5), 404–421.

ANNEXURE A

TOOLS

Household Questionnaire For Stigmatized Occupational Groups In Pune

If you do not want to answer any of the following questions, you are free to do so.

1. Name of the Interviewer:
2. Occupation:

I Socio-Economic Background

1. Respondent Name (Optional)
2. Gender: 1. Female 2. Male 3. Other
3. Locality and neighbourhood:
4. Occupation:
5. Do you do this business all year round? (Mark only one oval.)
 1. Yes
 2. No
- 5.1 If you are doing other work/occupation please write which one
6. How many years have you been living in Pune? (Mark only one oval.)
 1. 0-5
 2. 6-10
 3. 11-20
 4. 21-30
 5. 31-40
 6. 40 and more
7. What is the correct description of your hometown/place of birth? Mark only one oval.
 1. Metropolitan city
 2. District
 3. Small town / Taluka / Tehsil / Block
 4. Village

8. Has anyone in your family ever migrated? Mark only one oval.

1. Yes
2. No

9. Do you live in Pune all year round? (Or go back to your village for sometime?) Mark only one oval.

1. Yes
2. No

10. a. What is your caste?

10. b. What is your category? Mark only one oval.

1. Scheduled Castes (SC)
2. Scheduled Tribes (ST)
3. Other Backward Classes (OBC)
4. Nomadic Tribes (NT)
5. Deprived Castes (DT)
6. Economically Weaker Sections (EWS)
7. General

11. What is your religion? Mark only one oval.

1. Hindu
2. Muslim
3. Christian
4. Jain
5. Sikh
6. Buddhist / Neo-Buddhist
7. Tribal
8. Other:

12. a. What language is commonly spoken in your household? Mark only one oval.

1. मराठी / Marathi

12. b. Other (Specify)

13. Does anyone in your household speak or understand English? Mark only one oval.

1. Yes
2. No

II Family / Household

14. Please provide information about your family members below – Please see the table sheet.
15. Are any of the members of your family listed below formally educated? (Information about relatives who do not live in your house) (For family members not mentioned in the previous question)

Grandmother	1. Yes	2. No
Grandfather	1. Yes	2. No
Uncles	1. Yes	2. No
Aunts	1. Yes	2. No
Brother/Male-in-laws	1. Yes	2. No
Sister/female-in-laws	1. Yes	2. No
Cousins	1. Yes	2. No

16. What is the educational level of the family members who are currently living with you i.e. who are not listed in the table above?

_____ Please see the table sheet

17. What is the occupation of your extended family members?

_____ Please see the sheet

18. Does your family work on a farm or in any farming-related occupation? Mark only one oval.

1. Yes
2. No

19. Does your family own any farmland?

1. Yes
2. No

20. Do you go back to your village for agricultural work? Mark only one oval.

1. Yes
2. No

21. Which of the following items/tools do you have in your home? Please select the appropriate option.

3. Bicycle
4. Two-wheeler
5. Rickshaw
6. Four-wheeler
7. Mixer
8. LPG cylinder

9. Refrigerator
 10. Iron
 11. Hot water heater/Geyser
 12. Cooler
 13. Washing Machine
 14. TV and Dish or cable connection
 15. Computer
 16. Basic Phone
 17. Smart Phone
22. What is your monthly income? *Mark only one oval.*
18. Less than 5000 rs
 19. 5000-10,000 rs
 20. 10,000 - 20,000 rs
 21. 20,000–30,000 rs
 22. More than 30,000 rs
23. Please indicate your family's approx. monthly income? *Mark only one oval.*
1. Less than 5000 rs
 2. 5001-10,000 rs
 3. 10,001 -20,000 rs
 4. 20,000 - 30,000 rs
 5. More than 30,000 rs

III Housing, Surrounding, and Civic Amenities

24. What kind of house do you have? *Mark only one oval.*
1. Kaccha
 2. Pakka
 3. Semi Pakka
25. Is your settlement government authorized? *Mark only one oval.*
1. Yes
 2. No
26. Which of the options below most accurately describes your housing conditions? *Mark only one oval.*
1. Settlement
 2. Chawl
 3. Housing Colony
 4. Roadside Dwelling
 5. Slum rehab colony/A House allotted under a government housing scheme/Mhada

27. Is there anyone in your neighborhood who has or is currently pursuing a college education? *Mark only one oval.*

1. Yes
2. No

28. Do you have a toilet in your house?

1. Yes
2. No

29. What is your source of drinking water?

1. Tub Borewell
2. Corporation tap
3. Other

30. What identity documents do you have?

1. Aadhaar card
2. Ration card
3. Bank Passbook
4. Voter ID
5. PAN card
6. Driving license
7. Indian passport

31. If you have a ration card, which type is it? (check whichever is applicable)

1. Yellow ration card
2. Orange ration card
3. White ration card (apl)
4. Antyodaya Anna Yojana Card

32. Do you have a functioning bank account? *Mark only one oval.*

1. Yes
2. No

33. Was your bank account created under Jan Dhan Yojana? (Ask if the answer to Q.32 is yes) *Mark only one oval.*

1. Yes
2. No

IV Occupation and Insecurity

34. How many years have you been doing this work? *Mark only one oval.*

1. 1-10
2. 11-20
3. 21-30
4. 31-40
5. More than 40 Years

35. For last how many generations has your family been in this occupation? *Mark only one oval.*

1. One
2. Two
3. Three

36. Has anyone in your generation ever tried to quit this work? *Mark only one oval.*

1. Yes
2. No

37. To what extent would the next generation/ children enter this occupation? *Mark only one oval.*

1. Large
2. A very small
3. Not at all

38. Did you do any other work before entering this occupation?

1. Yes
2. No

39. What are your reasons for not leaving this work? (Check more than one if necessary)

1. Lack of education and skills required for other occupations
2. Having done this business for many years, have grown habitual to it.
3. Do not know any other work besides this work
4. Tried to but no other work was available
5. Once you do this work, you don't get any other jobs
6. This job pays better than many other jobs
7. Other

40. Is there a greater presence of people from your caste in the work you do?

1. Yes
2. No.

41. Have you ever experienced that this occupation and its workers are not respected by the society?

1. Yes
2. A little bit
3. Not at all

42. Do your children know about your work and its nature?

1. Yes
2. No

43. Is the income from this work enough for the education of your children?

1. Yes
2. No

44. Does the timing and nature of your work affect your child's learning opportunities/progress?

Mark only one oval.

1. Yes
2. No

45. In your opinion, what are the three most troubling issues in this occupation? Check all that apply.

1. Low/insufficient Income
2. The work is not regular
3. Insecurity at work/ Safety concerns at work
4. Adverse health effects
5. There is no prestige
6. Lack of organizations to meet the demands
7. Sexual harassment/molestation/ humiliation
8. Lack of Social Security (Pension, Insurance, etc.)

46. Do you know any specific schemes pertaining to your occupation?

- | | |
|---------------------|----------------------------|
| By the government | 1. Yes 2. No 3. Don't know |
| By the organization | 1. Yes 2. No 3. Don't know |

47. Does the organization make further efforts for the progress/upliftment of you or your children? What do they do? *Check all that apply.*

1. Training to enhance their skills
2. Help to attain your rights/demands in the workplace
3. Financial support for your children's education
4. Arrange for a loan when you are in trouble
5. Giving special scholarships to children for education
6. Special classes for them
7. Provide information on government schemes

V Family and Children's Education.

48. Give the following information about your son/ daughter's education? Please see the table sheet.

Mark only one oval.

49. What is the approximate annual spending on your son/daughter's education? *Mark only one oval.*

1. Up to 5,000
2. 6,000-10,000
3. 11,000-20,000
4. More than 20,000

50. What are all the expenses involved when it comes to your child's education?

Son / Daughter	Expenses Involved
1. Eldest Child	1. Fee 2. School uniforms 3. Hostel fee 4. Van/ transportation 5. Extracurricular activities (School Trips, Gathering etc.) 6. Tuition fees
2. Middle Child	1. Fee 2. School uniforms, Books etc 3. Hostel fee 4. Van/ transportation 5. Extracurricular activities (School Trips, Gathering, Projects etc.) 6. Tuition fees
3. Youngest	1. Fee 2. School uniforms 3. Hostel fee 4. Van/ transportation 5. Extracurricular activities (School Trips, Gathering etc.) 6. Tuition fees

51. Did you have to sell or mortgage your assets for your children's education? *Mark only one oval.*

1. Yes
2. No
3. Not applicable

52. Have you taken a loan or borrowed money for your children's education? *Mark only one oval.*

1. Yes
2. No
3. Not applicable

53. If so, from whom? *Mark only one oval.*

1. Private Bank
2. Cooperative Bank
3. Relatives/ friends
4. Self-help group

5. Moneylenders
6. Employers / Contractor
7. Organizations / Cooperative Society
8. Others

54. Have any of your children continued their higher/college education after getting married? *Mark only one oval.*

1. Yes
2. No
3. Not applicable

55. Is the school/college environment conducive to learning? *Mark only one oval.*

1. Yes
2. No
3. Not applicable

56. Do your children regularly attend school/college?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Not applicable

57. If they do not attend school regularly, what is the reason?

1. Financial difficulties / No money for education
2. Taking care of siblings
3. The school environment is not conducive
4. No interest in education
5. Have to work for a living
6. Learning difficulties such as the medium of instruction
7. Migration
8. Contribute to household chores
9. PWD (Person with special needs)

58.a. Are any of your children studying outside your village / city?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Not applicable

58.b. If yes, please give reason

1. Higher Education
2. To keep children away from the settlement/occupation.
3. Because residential schools have excellent infrastructures
4. Others
5. Not applicable

59. Do your children, who are studying, also contribute to the family financially?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Not applicable

60. How many hours does your learning child work? Please see the table sheet

No.	Nature of work	Daily working hours Son	Daily working hours Daughter	Not applicable
1	Housework			
2	Paid work			
3	Helping parents in their work			

VI Governmental schemes

61.a. Do you think that it is only because of government schemes that your children can get an education?

4. Yes
5. No

61.b. If yes, what schemes/amenities are your children receiving?

1	Reservation Quota
2	Free education/fee waiver
3	Hostels
4	Vocational education, Training
5	Free Textbooks
6	Basic diet

7	Uniforms
8	Bicycle / Bus Pass
9	School supplies
10	Others

VII Parental Involvement and Perspectives in Children's Education

62. Does your child regularly study at home?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Not applicable

63. Who helps school-age children at home with their studies/ homework? (You may choose more than one option.)

1. Father
2. Mother
3. Both
4. Private tuition
5. Brothers and sisters
6. No one
7. Children are not attended to in their studies at home.
8. Other

64. Do you keep track of your child's progress in school?

1. Yes
2. No.

65. How did your kid perform in exams prior to COVID? *Mark only one oval per row.*

The child	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Very bad
1.					
2.					
3.					

66. Did you need anyone's guidance for the things listed below?

1. When enrolling your child in school/college?
1. Yes 2. No.

2. When determining their subject choice?
1. Yes 2. No.
 3. When choosing a college/school?
1. Yes 2. No.
 4. Financial aid?
1. Yes 2. No.
 5. Regarding children's progress/difficulties
1. Yes 2. No.
67. Did anyone help out with the matters listed above? *Check all that apply.*
1. Relatives
 2. Neighbors
 3. Friends/colleagues
 4. Teacher
 5. Organization/ Organization workers
 6. Children themselves
 7. Other
68. Have you visited your child's school / college for the following reasons? *Check all that apply.*
1. Cultural / Sports Program
 2. Parent-teacher Meeting
 3. We went on our own to discuss the progress / problems of the children.
 4. Was called because of a complaint from the school.
 5. Have never visited
69. Has your child participated in the activities given below? *Mark only one oval per row.*
1. Cultural program / Gatherings
1. Yes 2. No.
 2. Inter-school competitions / programs
1. Yes 2. No.
 3. Scholarships and other competitive examinations
1. Yes 2. No.
 4. School Trips
1. Yes 2. No.
70. Are you a member of the school's parent-teacher committee? *Mark only one oval.*
1. Yes
 2. No
 3. Don't know
 4. Not applicable
71. Do you attend these meetings regularly? *Mark only one oval.*
1. Yes
 2. No

72. Do you think your child is interested in pursuing higher education? *Mark only one oval.*

1. Yes
2. No
3. Don't know / not applied

73. According to you, How important do you think education is for your son? *Mark only one oval.*

1. Very much
2. A little
3. Don't know

74. According to you, How important do you think education is for your daughter? *Mark only one oval.*

1. Plenty
2. A little
3. Don't know

75. What level of education do you want your son to have? *Mark only one oval.*

1. Tenth
2. Twelfth
3. Degree
4. Advanced Professional Degree
5. Don't know / not applicable
6. According to their choice

76. What level of education do you want your daughter to have? *Mark only one oval.*

1. Tenth
2. Twelfth
3. Degree
4. Higher Vocational Degree
5. Don't know / doesn't apply
6. According to their choice

77. Do you think your daughter should go out and work? *Mark only one oval.*

1. Yes
2. No

78. What kind of educational facilities are available in your area? *Check all that apply.*

1. Study / reading room
2. Library
3. Free coaching classes
4. Free computer training classes
5. Paid tuitions
6. Counseling service

7. Aptitude testing and career counseling centers
8. People who will give guidance to your child
9. Youth centers
10. Vocational Centers

79. What is done in your family so that your child will complete their education? *Check all that apply.*

1. Explain to them the importance of education.
2. Reduce TV time / exempted them from household functions so they do not get distracted
3. Keep them away from work
4. Arrange advice / guidance to children from well-educated co-workers / seniors / neighbors
5. Support them Financially
6. Not taking family stress / problems to children
7. Keep an eye on children's company / companions / friends
8. Help the children
9. Give Support, encouragement, incentives / rewards to move forward
10. Disciplined them

80. How do you think education will change your child's life?

81. How do you think the education of your son/ daughter will change your family's life?

ANNEXURE B

Key Informants Interview Schedule

A: About the Organization:

- ☐ For how many years have you been associated with this organization and what kind of work you are doing?
- ☐ Give information about your organizations:
- ☐ Who formed it? where, what was the vision behind it?
- ☐ Tell us about the type of organization: union, Institute/ organization.
- ☐ How will you describe the main objectives of the organization?
- ☐ How do you look at the work and workers who are doing this work?
- ☐ What is the condition of the workers with whom you are working?
- ☐ How have you developed this work? Can you tell us about the nature of work you are doing with/for workers and landmarks in your attempts to organize them?
- ☐ Can you share material published by your organization?

B: Work, Issues/challenges- Insecurities and Stigma

- ☐ What is the social background of those involved in this work- gender/caste/ region/ religion/ land ownership/migration etc.
- ☐ How do they come to this occupation?
- ☐ What are their major concerns/challenges?
- ☐ Tell us about their working condition and overall standard of living.
- ☐ Where and how do they get exploited?
- ☐ On which issues do you think we need to work? In the recent past which are the issues on which you had worked?
- ☐ Are there specific issues concerning women who are in this occupation? (Where both men and women were involved in the occupation)
- ☐ Is there any change in issues/ challenges they are facing in recent years?
- ☐ Do workers from this occupation leave this job and accept some other job? Which type of job do they generally take up after leaving this?
- ☐ Is there a status/prestige in this work? Why does this work is stigmatized / why is status denied to this work?
- ☐ What do you think about giving prestige/status to this work? What kind of programme do you run?
- ☐

C: Work, Education related and Organizational efforts

- ☐ What is the educational level of labourers? Do you think things have changed now then they were 20 -25 years back?
- ☐ Despite being educated do they come to this occupation?
- ☐ What about the status of their daughters – their educational level? What is the level of their education?

- ☐ Do they have to face unemployment issues after completing their education? They do not get the work that has prestige and status.
- ☐ What is the percentage of women coming into this occupation? Or in which occupation do they go?
- ☐ What are the major hurdles in their educational journey? Is their educational journey affected by the occupation of their parents? As the work done by their parents is considered stigmatized does that affect the educational journey of their children and in what ways?
- ☐ How does a family work for the education of their children? What are the efforts family takes in this regard? What kind of efforts are done at the level of slum/settlement or community?
- ☐ Does education offer any kind of mobility/transformation? Do they get any kind of freedom/autonomy? How?
- ☐ Do you think their work and education are interlinked? Is education important for this job? Or education makes no difference in this kind of work?
- ☐ If the worker is educated does that make any difference to their status at workplace? What kind of education do they need to take?
- ☐ What education means to them? What can be achieved through this? How do you connect education and the occupational group you are working with?
- ☐ What are the programmes and policies you have thought about? Please tell us in detail. What is your experience with it?
- ☐ According to you what needs to be done in this regard? Government/society or by anyone else?

ANNEXURE C

Focus Group Discussion Interview Schedule

Number of children: 7-12

Researchers Required: 2 (Observer and Conductor)

Aim: Mapping micro-practices to understand disparities and mobility

Round of introductions: name, class, locality, school, school timing and interests' area

Narrative of a First-Generation Learner Researcher (Structure to be decided according to Pilot)

Ice-breaker activity 2:

Positive power circle (All students will be given numbers to be able to map the activity. With each question, students will come forward and go back again for the next question)

1. Who likes to watch English movies? Marathi? Hindi? Tamil? Others?
2. Who uses Facebook the most on their phone? Instagram? Other?
3. Who has taken science? Diploma? BA? BCom? Others?
4. Who can speak in Marathi? Hindi? English? Others?
5. Who liked schooling through the online mode during the pandemic? Offline? Neither?
6. How many of you get scolded by your parents for studying? Not?
7. Who goes out to play every evening? Afternoon? Morning? Doesn't at all?
8. How do you commute to school every day? Bus/van/cycle/ two-wheeler/ walking

What is your happiest/proudest/greatest moment?

(In the following, each subsection will act as a probe to the respective question)

Introduction, education journey and impact:

1. What does your daily schedule look like?
 - a. What are your interests and disinterests in this schedule?
 - b. What do you dream of becoming/ who is your idol?
2. Who are your peers/friends in your academic institution/ locality?
 - a. Where do you go to spend time with these friends? (Place of leisure)
 - b. Do you go to school/college regularly or often miss school? How? Why? Where do you go?
 - c. What does spending time with your friend provide to you that you are unable to receive in school/ college?
3. How did you experience the shift from school to a junior college or junior college to senior college?
 - a. What are your challenges/obstacles that you have faced in your life, especially your educational journey?
4. How do you see the generational struggle in education within your household? What do you think

are the resources that you hold that your parents or other people in your surrounding don't versus the resources that they have that you don't?

- a. What is the change in ideology that you notice within your home between you and your parents/people in your neighborhood? Do you think your education has a role to play in the same?
 - b. Do you have any siblings/know people in your surroundings who have had to drop out? Do you think the pandemic affected the rate at which students had to drop out of school?
5. Knowing and seeing people around you drop out of education, how do you see yourself and your academic journey?
 - a. Why students dropped from the school or college? What do you think?
 - b. locality, language, class atmosphere
 6. Do you ever hope for any specific changes in your educational journey? If given the opportunity, what changes would you make?
 - a. If there were no restrictions/limitations in your life and you could achieve anything, what would you do?
 - b. What does education mean to you? What is it that higher education gives you that you don't think you'd have otherwise?

Parents' Occupation link Students Education:

7. Do most of the children's parents in your academic institution do the same work as your parents? (Specific to school students)
 - a. Do your teachers ever call your parents in for conversations about your education? (looking at teachers, students and parents networking)
 - b. Do you keep your parents in the loop with regards to PTMs etc.? If not college, then did you inform your parents regarding such meetings in school?
8. What is the difference in demographics of students that you have noticed whilst shifting from school to college and how has that impacted your surroundings?
 - a. What do you think impacts your life because of your parents' occupation? What have you gained owing to your parents' occupation? What are your aspirations?
 - b. How do you feel when your parents are treated a certain way because of their occupation or when you see them face hardships?
 - c. Have you even been part of your parents' occupation or do you think you'll ever be pushed into the same?
9. Do you like to watch Movie? Which type? Bollywood/Hollywood/Tollywood etc.
 - a. Favorite hero/songs/singer etc.

Organisation – Parents-Students linkage:

10. Do you know about the organisation under which your parents work? Does it help you/ has it brought any change in your life?
 - a. Have you ever participated in activities that have been conducted by organisations under which your parents work?
 - b. Do you attend any organisation-affiliated skill-based or extra classes? Do your parents ever ask you to attend these classes? (Wastepickers' children)
 - c. Where does your father work (Hamal Panchayat), is there a school for you? Do you have any friends who go to that school and why do you not attend the same? (Headloaders' children)
 - d. Since your parents' have joined the respective organisations, has there been a certain shift in your lifestyle and your education? (Amalgamation of occupation, organisation and education) (This question is common but can be used for domestic workers, specifically also)
11. What do you think are the changes that education will bring in your and your family's lives?

Activity- Report Card:

As part of the last activity, all the students will be provided with a piece of paper each, with already created divisions and some stickers. Each student will be required to make a report card assessing themselves. They will be asked to create any 5 subjects of their choice and grade themselves. Further, they will also be required to write 'remarks' for themselves against each subject. The students will get to take the report cards home with them.

ANNEXURE D

Life Narrative Interview Schedule

Research Question: How does one shape aspiration through education? How do students cope with their occupational identity in the environment of education? What role does the social and cultural background of individuals shape their aspiration?

Research Participants: 5 from each occupation group.

Mode: In Person, one to one, sit in.

Medium: Marathi/Hindi

Time: 60 – 90 mins

Introduction:

1. Tell me a little about yourself? What are you doing these days? (Self, Family, hobbies etc.)
2. Where do you stay? Tell us a little bit about where you grew up? Your neighbourhood? (location, type of area etc.)

Educational Journey:

3. How was your educational journey like, from school, college and university? (Probes – kind of school – government/private, change of school, migration- hostel, medium of learning, tuition, extra classes, personal priorities, etc.)
4. How was your experience of school/ college life? Examples of things/ events you liked/ disliked? Anything specific that you remember from your school and college times? (Explanation: To be able to gain an overarching understanding of subjective experiences of students within higher education depending upon not just their occupational group but also their location, social position, familial background, educational background, their own gendered experience etc.)
5. How/Why did you decide to pursue higher education? What motivated you to choose this stream/ level of education/ degree? If situations were different, would you have chosen a different academic stream?
6. Do you think you have missed out on anything in your academic journey? (Probes: gathering, sports events, cultural events, hang out space, field trips etc.)
7. What do you think made it possible for you/ encouraged you to pursue higher education? (Follow up with probing questions based on the response) (probes: family, community, friends, peers) Academic Resilience and Stigma
8. Can you tell us a little bit about your family/ describe your family? What do your family members do? Their education and occupational background? (Specifically of mother and grandmother –have they studied in the same institution as you have)

9. Did you face any difficulties during the admission process due to the online mode that you may have not been familiarised with? (occupational, organisational, family)
10. How would you describe yourself as a student/ what kind of a student were you?
(How regularly would you attend school / college? Would you be absent in school, college, why? Did you take any gap year while pursuing education? Did someone pay attention or regulate/ check your attendance in school / college? Was it different in college and school?) [Probes: Language, financial difficulties, economic background, difficulty in receiving loan, dropping out]
11. Did the school/ college interest you generally? How attentive were you in class? Did you ever feel like dropping out/ discontinuing/ taking a gap in education? When and why? (Explanation: If the student was discriminated against within the educational space or despite friendly peers, would often feel hesitant in introducing their familial occupation or background.)
12. Were there times or incidents, moments, when you felt intimidated, ignored, frustrated by others in your class / family / peers/ teachers etc. to leave school/ college? Have there been any similar incidents within your localities as well? Have any of these incidents specifically been dependent on your parent's occupation?
13. Are your parents part of any organisations/sangathans that is specific to their occupational group? Does that organisation/sangathan work towards educational improvement? Apart from this specific organisation/sangathan, are there any other NGOs or support groups that help with your education? What is your opinion of these spaces? (Probe: Do they help with improvement in education or help with family problems? Do either of these organisations have an impact on your higher education?)
14. What were some of the hurdles/ challenges you faced in life? Specifically, in your educational journey? (hurdles- sports, speech, gathering) (challenges- occupation/low economy)

Education and Aspiration:

15. When you were growing up, what did you want to be/ aspire to become? Who were your role models? While growing up, what were your dreams and how have they changed or remained unchanged as you've grown older and entered the space of higher education? How do you mark this journey? Have you shared these dreams/aspirations with anyone and what was their reaction? (Probe: Group, family, friend, friends around your locality)
16. Do you think there is transformation through education? Do you think these ideas are provided through our education systems today?
17. Has your school/ college made you ready for what you are doing today? (Example: Economic mobility; social and cultural mobility etc.)

18. Is there something you would change about your educational journey particularly, and what is it that you would do all over again? (Explanation: To be able to understand that nobody's educational journey can function alone and is also subjective. That 'good education' for most students is dependent on multiple other factors such as their familial background, economic status, safety, accessibility etc.)

Concluding Reflections:

19. If you could do anything you wanted and had no constraints, would you do something else in life?
20. What does education mean to you? What does higher education give you? How do you look at yourself in comparison to other students who stayed back / dropped out in college / university?

ANNEXURE E

List of Participants

Focus Group Discussion: Student Participants

Group 1: Domestic Workers Group

Sr.No	Student Name	Education
	Rutuja	B.com
	Manasi	12 th Passed
	Shruti	12 th Passed
	Nidhi	12 th Std
	Vardhini	12 th Std
	Siddhant	BMS S.Y.

Group 2: Sanitation Workers Group

Sr. No	Student Name	Education
	Dev	3 rd year (BE)
	Tejas	B.E.
	Vaishnvi	B.com
	Pallavi	MBA
	Jaee	BA
	Bhagyashree	Not mentioned

Group 3: Waste Pickers Group

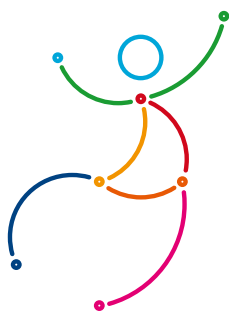
Sr. No	Student Name	Education
	Aparna	FYBA
	Divya	12 th
	Suchitra	FYBA
	Pradnya	B.com
	Vaibhav	12 th
	Pratiksha	FYBA
	Tejasvini	11 th
	Pratiksha	T. Y. B.com
	Om	12 th

Life Narrative Student Participants

Sr. No	Students Name	Parental Occupation
	Jaee	Sanitation Workers
	Tejas	Sanitation Workers
	Manasi	Domestic Workers
	Sapana	Domestic Workers
	Vinod	Domestic Workers
	Santosh	Domestic Workers
	Nadira	Domestic Workers
	Jyotsna	Waste Pickers
	Siddhesh	Waste Pickers
	Monica	Waste Pickers
	Tanuja	Waste Pickers
	Pradnya	Waste Pickers
	Rutuja	Head Loaders
	Sayali	Head Loaders
	Anushka	Head Loaders
	Nagesh	Brick Kiln Workers
	Gouri	Brick Kiln Workers
	Roshani	Brick Kiln Workers
	Kajal	Sex Workers
	Renuka	Sex Workers
	Preeti	Sex Workers
	Praveen	Sex Workers
	Shabnam	Sex Workers

Key Informants from the Workers' Organizations

No	Key Informants Name	Organisation Name	Occupational Group
1.	Tejaswi Sevekari	Saheli Sangh	Sex Workers
2.	Kiran Moghe	Pune Jilha Mahila Kamgar Sangh	Domestic Workers
3.	Nisha Parche	Manav Mukti Sanghatana	Sanitation Workers
4.	Atul Bhalerao	KKPKP	Waste Pickers
5.	Gorkah Mengade	Hamal Panchayat	Head Loaders
6.	Jyoti Adhav	India Sponsorship Committee	Brick Kiln Workers



TE|SF

TESF is a GCRF funded Network Plus, coordinated out of the University of Bristol, working with partners in India, Rwanda, Somalia/Somaliland, South Africa the United Kingdom and the Netherlands.

We undertake collaborative research to Transform Education for Sustainable Futures.

TESF partner institutions are:

Indian Institute for Human Settlements
Rhodes University
Transparency Solutions
University of Bristol
University of Glasgow
University of Rwanda
Wageningen University

www.tesf.network

info@test.network

[@TransformingESF](https://twitter.com/TransformingESF)

www.tesfindia.iihs.co.in

iihs[®]

INDIAN INSTITUTE FOR
HUMAN SETTLEMENTS

